THOMAS RYMER.

Author of the Fœdera and other popular Works

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July 17, 1677. R. L'*eſtrange*.

THE

Tragedies

OF

The last Age

Consider'd and Examin'd

BY THE

Practice of the Ancients,

AND BY THE

Common sense of all Ages.

IN A

LETTER

TO

Fleetwood Shepheard, Esq;

By THOMAS RYMER, of *Grays-Inn*, Esquire.

——*Clament persisse pudorem.*
Cuncti penè patres; ea quum reprehendere coner
Quæ gravis Æsopus, quæ doctus Roscius egit. Hor.

London, Printed for *Richard Tonson* at his Shop under *Grays-Inn* Gate, next *Grays-Inn* Lane, 1678.

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Advertiſement.

There is alſo to be printed an *Heroick Tragedy*, call'd

EDGAR

By the ſame Hand.

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TO

Fleetwood Shepheard, Esq;

HAving several mornings, and early, travell'd to St. *James's*, with the only design of being with you; and missing you as often; I became so mortify'd with the misfortune, that I resolv'd to come into the Town no more, till assur'd of your return from *Copt-Hall*: but because I meant not altogether to kill my self, for my entertainment I provided me some of those *Master pieces* of Wit, so renown'd every-where, and so edifying to the *Stage*: I mean the choicest and most applauded *English Tragedies* of this last age; as *Rollo*; *A King and no King*; the *Maids Tra-*

gedy by *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*: *Othello*, and *Julius Cæsar*, by *Shakespear*; and *Catiline* by Worthy *Ben*.

These I perus'd with some attention, and some reflections I made; in which, how far I mistake your sense, that is, how far I am mistaken, I desire to be inform'd.

I had heard that the *Theater* was wont to be call'd the *School* of *Vertue*; and *Tragedy* a *Poem* for *Kings*: That they who first brought Tragedy to perfection, were made *Vice-Roys* and Governors of *Islands*; were honoured every-where with Statues of Marble, and Statues of Brass; were stil'd the *Wise Sophocles*, the *Wise Euripides* by God and Man, by Oracles and Philosophers. That for teaching Morality, *Crantor* and *Chrysippus* were no-body to 'em. This latter transcrib'd the whole *Medea* of *Euripides* into his works. That so refin'd a People, and so frugal a *Common-wealth* as *Athens* did tax and assess themselves, and laid out more of their publick Exchequer upon the representation of these Plays, than all

their

their Wars ſtood them in, though ſometimes both Seas and Land were cover'd with Pagan Enemies that invaded them. And not *Athens* only, but (who hated *Athens*) ſo auſtere and glum a generation as thoſe of *Sparta*, by the care of *Lycurgus*, agreed the ſame honour to theſe *Athenian Poets*.

Theſe things coming into my mind, ſurely (thought I) mens brains lye not in the ſame place as formerly; or elſe Poetry is not now the ſame thing it was in thoſe days of yore.

I therefore made enquiry what *difference* might be in our *Philoſophy* and *Manners*; I found that our *Philoſophers* agreed well enough with theirs, in the *main*; however, that our Poets have forc'd another way to the *wood*; a *by-road*, that runs directly croſs to that of *Nature*, *Manners* and *Philoſophy* which gain'd the *Ancients* ſo great veneration.

I would not examin the *proportions*, the *unities* and *outward* regularities, the *mechanical part* of Tragedies: there is no talking of Beau-

ties when there wants Eſſentials; 'tis not neceſſary for a man to have a noſe on his face, nor to have two legs: he may be a *true* man, though aukward and unſightly, as the *Monſter* in the *Tempeſt*.

Nor have I much troubl'd their phraſe and expreſſion, I have not vex'd their language with the *doubts*, the *remarks* and eternal triflings of the *French Grammaticaſters*: much leſs have I caſt about for Jeſts, and gone a quibble-catching.

I have chiefly conſider'd the *Fable* or *Plot*, which all conclude to be the *Soul* of a *Tragedy*; which, with the *Ancients*, is always found to be a *reaſonable Soul*; but *with us*, for the moſt part, a *brutiſh*, and often worſe than *brutiſh*.

And certainly there is not requir'd much Learning, or that a man muſt be ſome *Ariſtotle*, and *Doctor* of *Subtilties*, to form a right judgment in this particular; common ſenſe ſuffices; and rarely have I known the *Women-judges* miſtake in theſe points, when they have the patience to think,

and

and (left to their own heads) they decide with their own ſenſe. But if people are prepoſſeſt, if they will judg of *Rollo* by *Othello*, and one *crooked line* by another, we can never have a certainty.

Amongſt thoſe who will be objecting againſt the doctrin I lay down, may peradventure appear a ſort of men who have remember'd *ſo* and *ſo*; and value themſelves upon their *experience*. I may write by the *Book* (ſay they) what I have a mind, but they *know* what will *pleaſe*. Theſe are a kind of *Stage-quacks* and *Empericks* in Poetry, who have got a *Receit* to *pleaſe*: And no *Collegiate* like 'em for *purging* the Paſſions.

Theſe ſay (for inſtance) a *King* and no *King*, *pleaſes*. I ſay the *Comical* part *pleaſes*.

I ſay that Mr. *Hart pleaſes*; moſt of the buſineſs falls to his ſhare, and what he *delivers*, every one takes upon *content*; their *eyes* are prepoſſeſt and charm'd by his *action*, before ought of the *Poets* can approach their *ears*; and to the moſt wretched

of *Characters*, he gives a luſtre and *brillant* which dazles the *ſight*, that the *deformities* in the Poetry cannot be perceiv'd.

Therefore a diſtinction is to be made between what *pleaſes naturally* in it ſelf, and what *pleaſes* upon the account of *Machines*, *Actors*, *Dances* and circumſtances which are meerly *accidental* to the *Tragedy*.

Ariſtotle obſerves, that in his time, ſome who (wanting the talent to *write* what might *pleaſe*) made it their care that the *Actors* ſhould help out, where the *Muſes* faild.

Theſe objectors urge, that there is alſo another great *accident*, which is, that *Athens* and *London* have not the ſame *Meridian*.

Certain it is, that *Nature* is the ſame, and *Man* is the ſame, he *loves*, *grieves*, *hates*, *envies*, has the ſame *affections* aud *paſſions* in both places, and the ſame *ſprings* that give them *motion*. What mov'd *pity* there, will *here* alſo produce the ſame effect.

This muſt be confeſt, unleſs they will, in effect ſay, that we have not

that

that *delicate taſt* of things; we are not ſo *refin'd*, nor ſo *vertuous*; that *Athens* was more *civiliz'd* by their *Philoſophers*, than we with both our *Philoſophers* and *twelve Apoſtles*.

But were it to be ſuppos'd that *Nature* with us is a *corrupt* and depray'd *Nature*, that we are *Barbarians*, and *humanity* dwells not amongſt us; ſhall our *Poet* therefore pamper this *corrupt* nature, and indulge our barbarity? Shall he not rather *purge* away the corruption, and reform our *manners*? Shall he not with *Orpheus* rather chooſe to draw the *Brutes* after him, than be himſelf a *follower* of the *Herd*? Was it thus that the *ancient* Poets (by the beſt Philoſophers) became ſtil'd the *Fathers* of Knowledg, and *Interpreters* of the Gods?

Laſtly, (though *Tragedy* is a Poem chiefly for *men* of *ſenſe*,) yet I cannot be perſwaded that the people are ſo very mad of *Acorns*, but that they could be well content to eat the *Bread* of civil perſons.

Say others, *Poetry* and *Reaſon*, how come theſe to be Cater-couſins? Poetry is the *Child* of *Fancy*, and is never to be ſchool'd and *diſciplin'd* by *Reaſon*; Poetry, ſay they, is *blind* inſpiration, is pure *enthuſiaſm*, is *rapture* and *rage* all over.

But *Fancy*, I think, in Poetry, is like *Faith* in Religion; it makes far diſcoveries, and ſoars above reaſon, but never claſhes, or runs againſt it. *Fancy* leaps, and friſks, and away ſhe's gone; whilſt *reaſon* rattles the chains, and follows after. *Reaſon* muſt conſent and ratify what-ever by *fancy* is attempted in its abſence; or elſe 'tis all *null* and void in law. However, in the contrivance and *œconomy* of a Play, *reaſon* is always principally to be conſulted. Thoſe who object againſt reaſon, are the *Fanaticks* in Poetry, and are never to be ſav'd by their good works.

Others imagin that theſe rules and reſtraints on the *Plot* and *Argument* of Tragedy, wou'd hinder much good *intrigue*, wou'd clog invention, and make all *Plays* alike and *uniform*.

But

But certainly *Nature* affords plenty and variety enough of *Beauties*, that no man need complain if the *deform'd* are cloyſter'd up, and ſhut from him. Such a Painter has been, who could draw nothing but a *Roſe*; yet other Painters can deſign one and the ſame good face in a thouſand ſeveral figures: it may be remember'd that there are but five vowels; or be conſider'd, from *ſeven* Planets, and their ſeveral poſitions, how *many faces* and fortunes the *Aſtrologer* diſtributes to the people. And has not a Poet more *vertues* and *vices* within his *circle*, cannot he obſerve them and their influences in their ſeveral *ſituations*, in their *oppoſitions* and *conjunctions*, in their *altitudes* and *depreſſions*: and he ſhall ſooner find his *ink*, than the *ſtores* of Nature exhauſted.

Other objections may be anſwer'd as they fall in the way. I would only have you before hand advertiz'd, that you will find me ty'd to no certain *ſtile*, nor laying my reaſons together in *form* and *method*. You will find me ſometimes reaſoning, ſometimes

times declaiming, ſometimes citing authority for common ſenſe; ſometimes *uttering* as my *own*, what may be had at any *Bookſhop* in the Nation: ſometimes doubting when I might be poſitive, and ſometimes confident out of ſeaſon; ſometimes turning *Tragedy* into what is *light* and comical, and ſporting when I ſhould be ſerious. This variety made the travel more eaſy. And you know I am not cut out for writing a *Treatiſe*, nor have a *genius* to *pen* any thing *exactly*; ſo long as I am *true* to the *main ſenſe* before me, you will pardon me in the reſt.

Nor will it, I hope, give offence that I handle theſe *Tragedies* with the ſame liberty thar I formerly had taken in examining the *Epick Poems* of *Spencer*, *Cowley*, and ſuch names as will ever be *ſacred* to me. *Rapin* tells us, for his own *Countreymen*, that none of them had writ a good *Tragedy*, nor was ever like to write one. And an (a) eminent *Ita-*

(a) O *ſia ſtata la loro poca fortuna, ò l'imperfetione della noſtra lingua nelle coſe gravi e A. Taſſone.*

lian

lian confeſſes, that the beſt of theirs exceeded not a mediocrity; and yet their *Divine Taſſo* had then writ a Tragedy, and *Torriſmodo* ſtrutted it in *buskins*.

But I have elſewhere declar'd my opinion, that the *Engliſh* want neither *genius* nor *language* for ſo great a work. And, certainly, had our Authors began with Tragedy, as *Sophocles* and *Euripides* left it; had they either built on the ſame foundation, or after their *model*; we might e're this day have ſeen Poetry in greater perfection, and boaſted ſuch *Monuments* of wit as *Greece* or *Rome* never knew in all their *glory*.

ACcording to the beſt account I can gather from old Authors, Tragedy was originally, with the Ancients, a piece of *Religious* worſhip, a part of their *Liturgy*. The Prieſts ſung an Anthem to their god *Diony-*

Dionyſus, whilſt the *Goat* (*b*) ſtood at his Altar to be *ſacrific'd*: And this was call'd the *Goat-ſong* or *Tragedy*.

Theſe Prieſts were call'd the *Chorus*, and now the whole Ceremony was perform'd by them, till *Theſpis* introduc'd the *Epiſods*, and brought an *Actor* on the Stage:

Which *Epiſods* the Prieſts at firſt mutini'd againſt as an *Innovation*, they liſten'd a long while, thought it ran off from the Text, and wonder'd how it wou'd be appli'd, till at laſt their patience could hold no longer, and they roar'd out, (*c*) *Nothing to* Dioniſus, *nothing to* Dionyſus, which gave beginning to the Proverb.

But the *Poet* gaining upon them by little and little, enlarged the *Epiſod*, till it grew the *main part*; the *part* which only is by us call'd the

(*b*) *Would therefore read in* Horace, Vilem certavit ad hircum, *as*--Rhetor dicturus ad aras; *not being ſatisfied in Antiquity with what the Commentators deviſe, when they read*,--- Vilem certavit ob hircum.

(*c*) Ἀδὲν Πρὸς Διόνυσον.

Tra-

Tragedy. And to make amends to *Dionyſus*, the *Theaters* were all conſecrated to him, and the Plays acted *there*, call'd *Dionyſus*'s *Plays*.

After much new-modelling, many changes and alterations, *Æſchylus* came with a *ſecond* Actor on the Stage, and leſſen'd the buſineſs of the *Chorus* proportionably. But *Sophocles* adding a *third* Actor, and *painted* Scenes, gave (in *Ariſtotle*'s opinion,) the utmoſt *perfection* to Tragedy.

And now it was that (the *men* of *ſenſe* grown weary with diſcourſing of *Atoms* and *empty Space*, and the *humour* of *Mechanical* Philoſophy near ſpent.) *Socrates* ſet up for *Morality*, and all the buz in *Athens* was now about vertue and good life.

Camerades with him, and Confederates in his worthy deſign, were our *Sophocles* and *Euripides*: But theſe took a different method.

He inſtructed in a pleaſant facetious manner, by witty *queſtions*, *alluſions* and *parables*.

Theſe were for teaching by *examples*,

ples, in a graver way, yet extremely *pleaſant* and *delightful*. And, finding in Hiſtoty, the ſame *end* happen to the *righteous* and to the *unjuſt*, *vertue* often oppreſt, and *wickedneſs* on the Throne: they ſaw theſe particular *yeſterday-truths* were imperfect and unproper to illuſtrate the *univerſal* and *eternal truths* by them intended. Finding alſo that this *unequal* diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments did perplex the *wiſeſt*, and by the *Atheiſt* was made a ſcandal to the *Divine Providence*. They concluded, that a *Poet* muſt of neceſſity ſee *juſtice* exactly adminiſtred, if he intended to pleaſe. For, ſaid they, if the World can ſcarce be ſatisfi'd with God Almighty, whoſe holy will and purpoſes are not to be *comprehended*; a *Poet* (in theſe matters) ſhall never be pardon'd, who (they are ſure) is not *incomprehenſible*; whoſe *ways* and *walks* may, without *impiety*, be penetrated and examin'd. They knew indeed, that many things naturally unpleaſant to the World in *themſelves*, yet gave *delight* when well

imita-

imitated. Theſe they conſider'd as the *(d)* picture of ſome *deform'd* old Woman, that might cauſe *laughter*, or ſome light, ſuperficial, and *comical* pleaſure; but never to be endur'd on ſerious occaſions, where the attention of the mind, and where the heart was engaged.

We have pictures that yield another ſort of pleaſure, as the *laſt Judgment*, of *Mich. Angelo*, the *Maſſacre* of the *Innocents*, the *Baptiſt*'s head, *&c.*

'Tis true; but if they yield any pleaſure beſides what proceeds from the art, and what reſts in eye. 'Tis by the Hiſtory, to which the picture ſerves only as an *Index*.

For till our memory goes back to the Hiſtory, the *head* of the *Baptiſt* can ſay no more to us, than the *head* of *Goliah*. But the Ancients in their Tragedies reſted not on Hiſtory.

They found that *Hiſtory*, groſly taken, was neither proper to *inſtruct*, nor apt to *pleaſe*; and therefore they

(*d*) Ariſtotle, *Poet.*

would

would not truſt Hiſtory for their examples, but refin'd upon the Hiſtory; and thence contriv'd ſomething (*e*) more *philoſophical*, and more *accurate* than *Hiſtory*. But whether our *Engliſh* Authors of Tragedy lay their foundation ſo deep, whether they had any *deſign* in their *deſigns*, and whether it was to *prudence* or to *chance* that they ſacrific'd, is the buſineſs of this preſent enquiry.

We have in *Herodian* the horrid and bloody ſtory of the two Brothers, *Antoninus* and *Geta*, Emperors, all which (*crude* and undigeſted, as in the *Original*) we find cram'd into

The Tragedy of Rollo *Duke of* Normandy.

NO reaſon, I preſume, can be given, why, having found an *Hiſtory*, this Author ſhould change the names; of *Antoninus* and *Geta*

(*e*) Σπουδαιότερον και φιλοσοφικώτερον.

into

into *Rollo* and *Otto*; *Emperors* of *Rome*, into *Dukes* of *Normandy*. Not why he alter'd the *Scene* to bring theſe Cut-throats and *Poiſoners* from the other ſide of the *Alps*. *Ariſtotle* tells it as extraordinary, of a *Tragedy* made by *Polemon*; wherein both the *names* and *matter* were of his own *invention*; and yet it had the fortune to *pleaſe*. He alſo reminds us that a man is better *pleas'd* with the *picture* of an *acquaintance*, than of a perſon of whom we had never *heard*. And we generally obſerve, when one tells of an *adventure*, or but a jeaſt, he will chooſe to father it on ſome one that is *known*, thereby to get attention, and gain more credit to what he relates. Beſides, many things are *probable* of *Antoninus*, or of *Alexander*, and *particular* men, becauſe they are *true*, which cannot be *generally probable*: and he that will be *feigning* perſons, ſhould confine his fancy to *general probability*.

The Fable is this:

Rollo and *Otto* Brothers, and both equally (let me call them) Kings of one and the ſame Kingdom, cannot agree about the matter. *Rollo* (by the means of his favourite *Latorch*) attempts to poiſon his Brother; which failing, he kills *Otto* in the arms of their Mother *Sophia*, with Sword drawn offers to kill his Mother and Siſter *Mat.* but is diſarm'd by *Aubrey*, yet ſends out Lord Chancellor *Gisbert* to be chopt in two, and thrown to the dogs; and his Tutor *Baldwin* alſo to be beheaded. *Hamond*, Captain of the Guards, ſaw all this executed. *Allan*, the Captain's Brother gives (his *quondam*-Maſter) the Chancellor, Chriſtian Burial: for which, he is ſent to por. *Edith*, *Baldwin*'s Daughter, beſeeches the King to ſpare her Father; prevails, but too late. *Rollo* is in love with her; ſhe reſolves his death. *Hamond*, in revenge of his Brother *Allan*, ſtabs, and is ſtab'd by *Rollo*, whoſe Siſter

Sister *Matilda*, *Aubrey* takes to Wife, and Reigns in his stead.

Now, if you call this a Fable; give me one of old *Æsop's*; where, for all the coarse out-side, there dwells a little *reasonable Soul* within, a little *good Sense* at the bottom, which carries it through all Nations, and will commend it to the end of the World.

For nothing certainly is design'd in this of *Rollo*, either to move *pity* or *terror*, either to *delight* or *instruct*: It is indeed a History, and it may well be a History; for never man of common *sense* could set himself to invent any thing so gross.

Poetry requires the *ben trovato*, something *handsomely invented*, and leaves the *truth* to History; but never were the Muses profan'd with a more foul, unpleasant, and unwholsome *truth*, than this which makes the Argument of *Rollo*.

If the *end* of this *Tragedy* is the Marriage and Coronation of *Aubrey*, had one of the ancient Poets been to cultivate this History; They would have laid the right of the Crown in

Aubrey. They would have given us to underſtand, that *Aubrey*'s Father, a good King, rais'd *Rollo*'s Father from a mean condition to be his favourite, and have the places of greateſt truſt and confidence with him. This ungrateful Villain moſt treacherouſly murders the King his Maſter, ſettles himſelf on his Throne, dies in Peace, leaves the Kingdom equally to his two Sons. Theſe Sons enter upon the Government, the people ſwear Allegiance to 'em, Complement them with Addreſſes from all Countreys; the Air rings with *Vive-le-Roy's* and Acclamations. The Sun ſhines as it was wont, the Graſs grows, Cows give white Milk, and no *Ægyptian* Plague troubles the Land. Heaven has forgot, and human means appear none, for either revenging the murder'd King, or reſtoring his Son *Aubrey*.

Now is the time for a Poet to ſhew his cunning. Now he muſt bring a ſudden and terrible judgment to deſtroy the *Rollian*-Race, and ſet young *Aubrey* on the Throne of his Anceſtors. To

To effect this, the two Brothers muſt be made to kill each other ; and, as a conſequence of this diſaſter, their Mother is to kill her ſelf for ſorrow.

Theſe Brothers, in their character, would have been harmleſs men, modeſt enough, and loving each other tenderly : for had they been wicked, the judgment upon them might be apply'd as due to their own crimes. Or however their Fathers crime in it ſelf would have appear'd leſs, as not enough alone to deſerve that vengeance ; and if the occaſion was not clear, the puniſhment would be leſs regarded ; but their innocence makes the puniſhment more ſignal and extraordinary, and more diſcovers the work of Heaven. And thus alſo they are capable of moving pitty, when only their Father's crime purſues them ; and it ſeems likely that, otherwiſe, they might have liv'd happily together.

Their Siſter *Mutilda* muſt have been a vertuous ſweet Lady, every way of ſingular merit, ſenſible of her

Father's crime, and of the wrong that *Aubrey* ſuffers. By this character, all thoſe who had *pittied* her Brothers, would have been extremely ſatisfi'd to ſee their Siſter ſo well preferr'd in the Marriage with *Aubrey*; for Heaven, by this, would ſeem, in her, to make ſome amends for the hard meaſure to the unfortunate Brothers.

Aubrey ſhould in all his words and actions appear great, promiſing, and Kingly, to deſerve that care which Heaven manifeſts ſo wonderfully in his Reſtoration.

And becauſe this, of the two Brothers killing each other, is an action *morally* unnatural; therefore, by way of *preparation*, the *Tragedy* would have begun with Heaven and Earth in diſorder, *nature* troubl'd, unheard-of *prodigies*; ſomething (if I may ſo ſay) *phyſically* unnatural, and againſt the ordinary courſe of nature. Perhaps the firſt *Scene* would have ſhew'd the Uſurper's *Ghoſt* from Hell, full of horror for his crime, curſing his Sons, and ſending ſome infernal *fury* amongſt them. And,

And, by the way, he might relate all things fit to be known, which paſt out of the *Drama*.

The nicety in writing upon this *Fable*, would have chiefly been in the *characters* of the two Brothers, Theſe are the perſons kill'd, and, of all things, a Poet muſt be tender of a mans life, and never *ſacrifice* it to his *Maggot* and *Capriccio*. Therefore, as (I ſaid) the Brothers were not to be *wicked*, ſo likewiſe they ought not to be abſolutely innocent. For if they had refuſed to ſucceed their Father, and when they might have ſat on the Throne, have humbled themſelves at *Aubrey*'s feet; then no *Poetical Juſtice* could have touch'd them: guilty they were to be, in enjoying their Father's crime; but not of committing any new. And this guilt of theirs was alſo either to be palliated, or elſe to be paſt over in ſilence, leſt, laid too open, the compaſſion of the Audience might be abated. Neither would it ſuffice that theſe Brothers kill each other by ſome chance; but it ſhould appear, that agitated by their

Father's crime, like *Machines*, they unavoidably clash against each other; whilst their proper *inclination* in vain strives against the *violence*.

If the *English Theatre* requires more *intrigue*, an Author may multiply the *Incidents*, may add *Episods*, and *thicken* the *Plot*, as he sees occasion; provided that all the *lines* tend to the same *center*: more of a main *Plot*, *Virgil* requir'd not for his *Epic* Poem.

And peradventure, if the Poet design any certain *sense* by his *Fable*, that sense will bind him to the *unity* of *action*; and the *unity* of *action* cannot well exceed the rule for *time*. And these two *unities* will not permit that the Poet can far transgress in the *third*. So that all the *regularities* seem in a manner to be link'd together: but begin with an absurdity, and nothing reasonable can ever follow. If a Pilot puts to Sea without resolving for what Port, none can wonder that he sails not by the *Compass*.

To return to this *Tragedy* of *Rollo*,

if

if the ſtreſs of the deſign reſts not on *Aubrey*; but the ſenſe of all *terminates* in *Rollo*. The ſenſe muſt be this; *He that ſheds the blood of man, by man ſhall his blood be ſhed.* And if this be all, where's the Wonder? Have we not every day cried in the Streets, inſtances of God's *revenge* againſt *murder*, more extraordinary, and more poetical than all this comes to? If this be Poetry, *Tyburn* is a better and more ingenious *School* of *Vertue*, than the *Theatre*.

In former times *Poetry* was another thing than *Hiſtory*, or than the *Law* of the Land. *Poetry* diſcover'd crimes, the *Law* could never find out; and puniſh'd thoſe the *Law* had acquitted. The *Areopagus* clear'd *Oreſtes*, but with what *Furies* did the *Poets* haunt and torment him? and what a wretch made they of *Oedipus*, when the *Caſuiſt* excus'd his *invincible* ignorance?

The *Poets* conſider'd, that naturally men were affected with *pitty*, when they ſaw others ſuffer more than their fault deſerv'd; and *vice*, they thought,

thought, could never be painted too ugly and frightful; therefore, whether they would move *pitty*, or make *vice* deteſted, it concern'd them to be ſomewhat of the ſevereſt in the puniſhments they inflicted. Now, becauſe their hands were tied, that they could not puniſh beyond ſuch a degree; they were oblig'd to have a ſtrict eye on their Malefactor, that he tranſgreſt not too far, that he committed not *two* crimes, when but reſponſible for *one*: nor, indeed, be ſo far guilty, as by the Law to deſerve death. For though *hiſtorical Juſtice* might reſt there; yet *poetical Juſtice* could not be ſo content. It would require that the ſatisfaction be compleat and full, e're the *Malefactor* goes off the *Stage*, and nothing left to God Almighty, and another World. Nor will it ſuffer that the Spectators truſt the *Poet* for a *Hell* behind the *Scenes*; the fire muſt roar in the conſcience of the *Criminal*, the *fiends* and *furies* be conjur'd up to their faces, with a world of *machine* and horrid ſpectacles; and yet the *Criminal* could

could never move *pitty*. Therefore amongſt the *Ancients* we find no Malefactors of this kind; a wilful Murderer is with them as ſtrange and unknown, as a *Paricide* to the old *Romans*. Yet need we not fancy that they were ſqueamiſh, or unacquainted with any of theſe great *lumping* crimes in that age; when we remember their *Oedipus*, *Oreſtes*, or *Medea*. But they took care to waſh the Viper, to cleanſe away the venom, and with ſuch art to prepare the morſel: they made it all Junket to the taſt, and all Phyſick in the operation.

They ſo qualifi'd, ſo allaid, and cover'd the *crime* with circumſtances, that little could appear on the *Stage*, but either the cauſes and provocations before it, or the remorſe and penitence, the deſpairs and horrors of conſcience which follow'd, to make the *Criminal* every way a fit object for *pitty*. Nor can we imagin their Stage ſo rarely endur'd any bloodſhed, and that the ſight was diſpleaſing, becauſe the Spectators were ſome ſort of effeminate, unfighting fel-

fellows. When we remember the Battels of *Marathon* and *Salamin*; and with what ſmall number theſe very Spectators had routed *Xerxes* and the greateſt Armies in the World. For now it was that the *arms* of the *Athenians* (as well as their *arts*) ſhin'd in their greateſt glory.

The truth is, the *Poets* were to move pitty; and this pitty was to be mov'd for the living, who remain'd; and not for the dead. And they found in nature, that men could not ſo eaſily pardon a crime committed before their faces; and conſequently could not be ſo eaſily diſpos'd to beſtow that pitty on the *Criminal* which the Poets labour'd for. The Poets, I ſay, found that the ſight of the fact made ſo ſtrong an impreſſion, as no art of theirs could afterwards fully conquer.

But leave reaſoning, and return to *Rollo*; it ſeems very odd to ſee the firſt four *Scenes* paſs as if nothing extraordinary were towards, without any preparation; and immediately, without more ado, the two Brothers,

two

two Kings, are a fighting. The *Ancients* would have made the Earth tremble, and the Sun ſtart out of the Firmament at a ſight ſo unnatural. Yet we make no more of them, but turn them out, like two Cocks of the Game, for the diverſion of the Rabble.

Some have remark'd, that *Athens* being a *Democracy*, the Poets, in favour of their Government, expos'd Kings, and made them unfortunate. But certainly, examin the Kings of their *Tragedies*, they appear all *Heroes*, and ours but *Dogs*, in compariſon of them. So reſpectful they ſeem to Kings in their *Democracy*, and ſo unthinking and unpolitick are our *Poets* under a *Monarchy*. *Thebes* was always enemy to *Athens*, yet would not any *National* pique, nor other, provoke the Poets to treat thoſe Kings unhandſomly; becauſe by their rules to have leſſen'd the Kings, would have made their *Tragedies* of no effect, in moving the pitty intended by them. They made the Kings *unfortunate*, we make them

wicked

wicked: they made them to be *pittied*, we make them to be *curſt* and *abhorr'd*.

That I may, in all hitherto laid down, be the better underſtood, let it be obſerv'd what meaſures *Euripides* took in the Tragedy of *Etheocles* and *Polynices*.

This inſtance I chooſe, the condition of thoſe *Theban* Kings being the neereſt to this of *Rollo* and *Otto*: for they alſo were equally Kings, could not agree, kill'd each other. That we might not ſuſpect that the diſſention between them roſe from any malice of their own, we are let to know, that the Gods owe a vengeance to *Thebes*, which is now ripe, and ready to fall upon them, for a crime of their Founder *Cadmus*.

That their Grandfather *Laius* warn'd by the *Oracle* not to marry, his Marriage had ſo incens'd the Gods, that now they were puniſhing his diſobedience on the third generation.

That their Father *Oedipus* had curſt them, and praid they might dye by each others hands. Theſe

Theſe Brothers, to avoid their Father's *curſe*, agree, not to live together, but to Reign by the year alternately, and each to be King in his turn. According to this agreement, the younger Brother goes into baniſhment, where he marries, makes Allies of ſome *hot-headed* Princes, as *Tydeus*, *Capaneus*, and five more, and brings a Confederate Army before *Thebes*. The Brothers have an enterview; *Polynices* demands his *turn*; *Etheocles* anſwers to this effect.

Now, whilſt I may continue a King, I cannot willingly yield to become a Servant. Neither take you a right courſe, coming with force of Arms, and laying the Countrey waſt. Thebes *would bluſh, ſhould I reſign my Scepter for fear of the* Mycenæan *ſpears. In fine, Brother, if I am to tranſgreſs, for a Kingdom I would tranſgreſs; in all the reſt* (f) *ſerve God.*

This haughty ſpeech of *Etheocles* turns all the current of pitty to his Brother's ſide. Now the Confederates

(f) εὐσεβεῖν.

fall

fall on to ſtorm the Town, are repuls'd, with great ſlaughter on both ſides. *Etheocles*, notwithſtanding he was the King in poſſeſſion, notwithſtanding he knew (by *Tyreſias* the Prophet) that the *Thebans* would be *victorious*, and notwithſtanding the danger of his Father's *curſe*; yet out of his generoſity and humanity to ſave the effuſion of innocent blood; offers the ſingle Combat with his Brother; which accepted, both are kill'd, and dye friends. *Etheocles* could not ſpeak, indeed, but his ſighs were all tenderneſs. The laſt breath of *Polynices* made theſe words;

(g) *My friend turn'd enemy, but ſtill my friend.*

But though *Polynices* ſeems ill treated, and his Brother is much too ſharp upon him. The reaſon given by the *Poet*, is, becauſe he brings foreign Forces to invade his *Native* Country: and perhaps the Poet on this occaſion might ſomewhat ſtrain his *Philoſophy* to gratify the *Politi-*

(g) ὁ φίλος γὰρ ἐχθρὸς ἐγένετ', ἀλλ' ὅμως φίλος·

tian.

cian, but the Poet ſeems ſo afraid that the *Audience* ſhould forget that theſe diſſentions are the effect of their Anceſtors crimes; and in no wiſe ſpring from their own ill mind and election; that he is every where a hinting to us the curſe entailed on the Family by their Grandfathers Marriage; the violence of ſuperior powers, of Demons and Furies, which we want language to expreſs, ——ἤ δεινά τις ἐρεὶ θεὸς: or ſome terrible goddeſs diſcord.

——εἶτ' ἔρις, εἴτε πατὴρ ὁ σὸς ἄπιθ'.

ἔστε τὸ δαιμόνιον:—— Whether diſcord or your Father is the cauſe, or ſome ill ſpirit. Κάδμε παλαῖον ſuffer for the old pique againſt *Cadmus*, νοσεῖ γὰρ ἥδε γῆ—— the land is ſick, ὃν δ' ἔπνευσ' ἀντῖοις ἀρὰς δεινὰς—— breath'd terrible curſes againſt them, ἀρὰς ἀρᾶται παισὶν ἀνοσιωτάτας did curſe moſt unhallowed curſes to his Sons, τὰς σὰς ἀρὰς δ' ἔοικεν ἐκπλησεῖν θεὸς ἔξ ἐ τεκνώσῃ Λαΐου βίᾳ θεῶν. God is ready to fulfil your curſes, becauſe in ſpight of the gods *Laius* made Children, ἀρὰς παρελαβὼν Λαΐου καὶ παισὶ δούς, handing the curſes from *Laius* down to

his posterity, —— ὃ γὰρ —— ἄνευ Θεῶν τοῦ, —— I was not born such a fool to pull out my own eyes, and curse my Sons, if some of the Gods had not made me mad, says *Oedipus*, διὰ δὲ τοὺς ἀλάστορας, —— because of your fiends. ὅ σὸς ἀλάστωρ, —— your fiend is the cause.

ὅθεν ἐπέσσυτο τάνδε γᾶν

ἁρπαγᾶισι δαιμόνων τις ἄτα, some bane sent upon the land by evil spirits, γάμων ἐπακτὰν ἄταν, the bane fixed to the Marriage of *Laius*, παπρὸς οὐ φεύξεσθ' ἐρινῦς. not escape their Fathers *Furies*, χάρματ' ἐρινύος, the joy of the *Furies*, ἕνεκεν ἐρινύων, because of the *Furies*, πημονὰν ἐρινύων, the Plague of the *Furies*, στενάζων ἀρὰς τέκνοις, sighing curses against his Sons, καὶ τὸ Θέοθεν, —— what comes from god, δαιμονοῦντας, haunted with evil spirits θείᾳ προνείᾳ νεικέων ἐπώνυμον, *Polynices* had his name from Contention.

By what I have noted one might think the Poet would have us believe that all the Furies in Hell were broke loose and at work to make these two Brothers miserable, and consequently would have us take their

their part, would engage our affections, and carry our heart along with a ſenſe of their ſufferings: Heaven and Earth conſpire their ruine.

Quid meus Æneas in te committere tantum?

What had they done to deſerve this perſecution? the curſe of their Father lay neareſt them, and is moſt inſiſted on by the Poet, how had they vexed their Father? their Father tranſported with the ſenſe of his own horrible misfortunes, tore out his own Eyes, and in that condition would have run about the ſtreets, but theſe two Sons of his kept him within doors by force, this enrag'd him the more, and he threw his curſes about him, which ſome evil ſpirits (who haunted the houſe for ſome old accounts) gladly lay hold on, and never reſted till thoſe curſes had their effect.

By what has been obſerv'd any one may judge whether theſe *Characters* of *Etheocles* and *Polynices*, or thoſe of *Rollo* and *Otto* be the better contrived for moving that pity which

Tragedy requires. And I have been the more particular, becauſe not only *Rollo*, but moſt of the *Characters* in our Tragedies of the laſt Age, may be examin'd by the ſame reaſon. And yet *Eurypides* has been blam'd for making his Characters more *wicked* then they ought to be in *Tragedy*: he was not taxed by *Ariſtophanes* and *Ariſtotle* only, but by *Sophocles*, and the general ſenſe of *Athens* was againſt him. They ſaid, in thoſe days, that Comedy (whoſe Province was humor and ridiculous matter only) was to repreſent things worſe then the truth. Hiſtory to deſcribe the truth, but Tragedy was to invent things better then the truth. Like good Painters they muſt deſign their Images like the Life, but yet better and more beautiful then the Life. The Malefactor of Tragedy muſt be a better ſort of Malefactor then thoſe that live in the preſent Age. For an obdurate impudent and impenitent Malefactor can neither move compaſſion nor terror; nor be of any imaginable uſe in *Tragedy*.

See we then *Rollo*, fighting with his own Brother and King, equal to himſelf, and attempting to poyſon him, without any remorſe; killing him in their mothers arms, without any provocation; calling the Queen their Mother *Belldam*, and with drawn ſword threatning to kill both her and his Siſter, without any ſenſe of honour or piety; and muſt we not imagine a Legion of Devils in his belly. When *Rollo* has murder'd his Brother, he ſtands condemn'd by the Laws of Poetry; and nothing remains but that the Poet ſee him executed, and the Poet is to anſwer for all the miſchief committed afterwards. But *Rollo* we find has made his eſcape, and wo be to the Chancellor, to the Schoolmaſter, and the Chancellors Man; for thoſe are to be men of this world no longer. Here is like to be *Poetical Juſtice*, ſo many lives taken away, and but the life of one guilty perſon to anſwer for all, and is not this a ſtrange method of killing? If the *Planets* had contriv'd him for a *Cock* of thirteen, his firſt Victory ſhould not have

been the moſt important, he ſhould firſt have praictis'd on his ſubjects, and have riſen by degrees to the height of iniquity. His Brother Soveraign was his top-murder; nothing remain'd after that, unleſs it were his Lady-Mother.

Neither is *Otto* here a much more taking Gentleman, nothing appears in his *Cue* to move pity, or any way make the Audience of his party.

But of all the world who wou'd ever have expected that *Aubrey* is to ſucceed in the Kingſhip? 'Tis a good man, but the dulleſt good man that ever Poet advanc'd to a Throne by ſuch extraordinary means. Some Dreams or old Propheſie ſhould have begun an expectation in us; or ſome *Lambent-fires* incircling his head, have drawn the peoples eyes upon him. *Rollo* and *Otto* muſt both make untimely ends, to make way for *Aubrey*. So ſtrange a Revolution never happens in Poetry, but either Heaven or Earth gives ſome forenotice of it.

However

However, ſomething ſhining and extraordinary ought to have appear'd in his *Character*. Indeed he parts *Rollo* and *Otto* fighting, and *Rollo* was once diſarm'd by him. But then for decencies ſake and *Rollo's* credit, he ſhould have been lookt on as ſomething more then a meer Subject. In all the reſt he appears an humble endeavourer, ſpeaks honeſtly to no purpoſe, is brav'd and abus'd by Raſcals. Whereas each ſtep of his ſhou d have been attended with ſuch awe and Majeſty, that the ſpectators, if not gueſs, might at leaſt wiſh to ſee him their Soveraign; and have the pleaſure to ſee their wiſhes ſucceſsful.

Gisbert and *Baldwin*, Chancellor and Tutor are *Devota Capita*, only come on the *Stage* to make *Rollo* the greater ſinner by their murder.

Further to ſhew his rage againſt the Chancellor, ſays *Rollo*,

Captain, beſides remember this in chief,
That being executed, you deny,

To all his Friends the rites of Funeral,
And caſt his Carkaſs out to Dogs and Fowls.

No reaſon here is given for this inhumanity.

On the like occaſion *Sophocles* contriv'd a Tragedy, the *Plot* is this. By the death of *Etheocles* and *Polynices*, *Creon* King of *Thebes* made an Edict, that none, upon pain of being buried alive, ſhould preſume to give burial to *Polynices*, the reaſons pretended are, That *Polynices* had brought Forreigners to invade his Country, and *Etheocles* had dyed in his Countreys defence, and therefore it would be unjuſt to give to both the ſame honour of Funeral. He further alledges a charge left by *Etheocles* to the ſame effect. Now the piety of *Antigone* could not digeſt ſo hard a Law, but in the night ſhe goes and covers her Brother with earth, is taken by the Watch, and (*Creon* being deaf to all interceſſion) is ſent to puniſhment. When the Biſhop *Tyreſias* reproving *Creon* ſtrikes him with remorſe,

morſe, who thereupon runs himſelf to reprieve her, hears from her Tomb the laſt groans of his only Son *Hæmon*, who he finds had ſtabb'd himſelf and lay a dying at the feet of *Antigone*, his dead Miſtreſs. This diſaſter brought the ſame violent Fate on the Queen *Eurydice*, and with her depriv'd *Creon* of all that could be dear to him in the world.

In this we have every thing *juſt*, every thing *ſurprizing*, every thing *paſſionate* to extremity.

Whereas in *Rollo* we meet with ſo much ſtuff lumberd together, that not the leaſt ſpring can work, nor the leaſt paſſion ſtir, that is pleaſant or generous; nor the leaſt proportion or beauty of Tragedy appear. *Ariſtotle* ſays that an Image drawn with Chalk in the exact ſhape and ſymmetry, will pleaſe more then a whole potful of the beſt Colours thrown upon a wall without any figure or deſign.

But to proceed with the Characterrs. *Sophia* at the firſt appears a woman of ſpirit, in oppoſing ſo vehemently the diviſion of the Dukedom.

But

But ſhe ill maintains this Character; when *Rollo* in her preſence murders his Brother, threatens both her and her Daughter, ſhe very tamely exhorts the Daughter to a vile compliance, ſays ſhe

Riſe Daughter, ſerve his will in what we may,
Leaſt what he may not, he enforce the rather.
Is this all you command us?

She ought ſurely in another ſort of tone to have reſented this outrage, or before to have manifeſted a partiality for *Rollo*.

At his death Hiſtory informs us ſhe died of grief. 'Tis a wonder this Tragedy ſpares her; hers would have been a more decent and Poetical death then any of the reſt. In this the Hiſtory is the better Tragedy.

The Princeſs *Matilda* for the ſmall part ſhe bears, acquits her ſelf bravely enough. Yet, methinks, *Aubrey* and ſhe ſhould have exchang'd ſome words; ſome glances have been caſt, or otherways ſome approaches have been

been begun. For here there ſcarce go three words to the bargain. In the laſt lines of the Play he comes to this Lady as abruptly as to the *Dukedom*, both drop into his mouth.

In Edith theſe waylings, clingings, and beſeechings; theſe ſhowers of tears and words.

---as you are a god above us,
Be as a god then full of ſaving pity,
Mercy, O Mercy Sir, for his ſake Mercy,
That when your ſtout heart weeps, ſhall give you pity.
Here I muſt grow.

This ſort of importunity is nothing ſo proper in this place, it might much better become *Comedy*, where Miſs *La Fool* intercedes for little Dog or Moncky, in peril for ſome miſdemeanor; ſomething more of ſtomach and courage had ſuited her better. Tragedy requires not what is only Natural, but what is great in Nature, and ſuch thoughts as quality and Court-education might inſpire. She might indeed be ſurpriz'd, and at the firſt let the meer Natural woman eſcape

cape a little, but one or two ſo harſh and barbarous repulſes ſhould have rouz'd that Tragical ſpirit ſo vilely proſtituted, and made her reflect on the other bloody ſcenes, ſo lately acted before her eyes, and caus'd her to deſpair before ſhe had troubl'd us with her endleſs impertinencies.

Nor indeed comes ſhort of her for tongue and wind, the old *Dutcheſs*, when in all reaſon one might expect that ſo violent grief and paſſions would choak them; they run chattering, as if the concern were no more then a *goſſiping*: theirs are not of the old cut, *Curæ leves loquuntur ingentes ſtupent.*

Take her then reſolv'd to kill this *Holofernes*, when ſhe ſets up for a *Heroine*, and will revenge the blood of the murder'd King *Otto*, of her Father, and the reſt. When that ſcene preſents her full of dire deſign and bloody purpoſe, we then indeed have her conciſe in word, and *Laconick* in the *repartee*. To the firſt Complement ſhe anſwers.

Your

Your grace is full of game.
Wilt please you sit Sir.
Of what Sir.
Has a strange cunning tongue,
Why do you sigh Sir.
My anger melts, O I shall lose my justice.
His tongue will tempt a Saint.
He will fool me.

Is it likely that a Lady in her circumstances could be sensible what a pretty lisping way he had with him; or could listen to the soft things he spoke, or answer him so lightly? is not this more like some *Minx* in an Alley, then any Character for Tragedy? There are in Women comical frailties, and heroick frailties: and several considerations might have made her resolution stagger; but this of the *tempting tongue* is *Comedy* out of season.

I would also in this scene note this passage, says

Ham. Pray.

Roll. Pray.

Ham. Pray if thou canst pray, I will

will kill thy ſoul elſe.

Pray ſuddenly.

This I think ſounds not ſo well in Poetry, whatever it may do in Divinity. And now that I am upon the ſhort Dialogues, let me cite one that went before.

Ham. *See Sir* Gisberts *head.*

Roll. *Good ſpeed, was't with a Sword.*

Ham. *An Axe, my Lord.*

Roll. *An Axe, 'twas vilely done.*

But leaving *Edith*, let us examine what was there in this *Latorch* to give him the aſcendant over his Soveraign? Was it his Quality, his Valour, or ſome Peſtilent Wit, or what Fiddle had he to Charm this ſavage Maſter of his? (*a*) An Hiſtorian (who was never taxt for a prodigal of his words) could not mention the *Dame* that led *Cataline* aſtray, without annexing the Inventory of her Excellencies, as how well ſhe Danc'd, how ſhe handl'd the Lute, and how ſhe ſpoke Greek. Yet *Rollo* a Prince of as great importance to us, is led by the Noſe to do all the miſchiefs under

(a) *Saluſt.*

the

the Sun; and no body knows who 'tis does manage him.

'Tis poſſible that a Prince may abandon himſelf to be rul'd by ſome buſie creature of no conſideration. The *Annals* of *Normandy* may mention ſuch *Dukes*.

Hiſtory may have known the like. But *Ariſtotle* cries ſhame. *Poetry* will allow of nothing ſo unbecoming, nor dares any Poet imagine that God Almighty would truſt his Anointed with ſuch a Guardian Devil.

In the third *Act* enters *Hamond*, Captain of the Guard, and is a nimble Executioner; and who would gueſs this the Man ordain'd to kill the Dragon. But whether in Poetry this job more properly belong'd to *Edith*, or to this *Hamond*, may be a queſtion.

In the firſt place 'tis reſolv'd that to neither of them did it belong, but that (of the two) *Edith* might rather have kill'd *Rollo*, the following reaſons may prove, *viz.*

1. To *Edith* the provocation was greater; a Father engaging our Piety more ſtrongly then a Brother.

2. *Ha-*

2. *Hamond* holding a place of truſt, had a ſtricter tye upon him: and *Edith* lying under no ſuch obligation; the fact in her would not have been ſubject to ſo many aggravations.

3. She, as a woman, might be preſum'd not ſo well to underſtand Allegiance, and to diſtinguiſh how far her Piety was to be reſtrain'd by it.

4. As in her ſex reaſon is ſaid to be more feeble, ſo the Paſſions are ſuppos'd to be the more violent and precipitate.

5. The puniſhment had been more ſignal and more grievous to the Tyrant, dying by the hand of a woman, and a woman to whom he was making love.

6. By a woman the fact would have been more ſurpriſing and extraordinary; and greater would have been the wonder, which a Poet always endeavours for, when it claſhes not with probability.

7. *Baldwin* was of better quality then *Allan*. For though the Maid might be content enough to be rob'd of her revenge; yet what would her

Fathers

Fathers Ghoſt ſay? And indeed what would the *Chancellor's* and *Otto's* Ghoſt ſay? was their blood dumb? or was not the cry of their blood to be heard? muſt they be murder'd and no harm enſue? only to the Manes of the Chancellors Man muſt this Monarch be ſacrific'd.

Allan *te hoc vulnere---* ſays *Hamond.*

Allan, my Brother *Allon* gives this ſtab.

Allon it ſeems is ſatisfi'd, whilſt his betters muſt be fain to appeal, and wait till *Doomſday.*

Hitherto the Plot and Caracters.

For the thoughts and good ſenſe, compare the ſpeech againſt dividing the Dukedom, with that in *Herodian* (from whence our Author takes it) on that ſame occaſion. Upon the diviſion it was agreed, the one Brother to have *Europe*, the other to have *Aſia*; which their Mother hearing, thus ſpoke,

The Sea and Land, my Sons, you have found how to divide; the Propontick, *you ſay, is a bound for either Continent, but how is it that*

you will divide your Mother? how shall wretched I be cut in two and disposed on to each of you? first, therefore, first slay me, and each of you take his moiety with him, and bury it. So with the Sea and Land, I also shall be divided between you.

Says *Sophia*,

Divide me first, and tear me limb by limb,
And let them find as many several graves,
As there are Vilages in Normandy,
And 'tis less sin than so to weaken it.
To hear it mention'd, does already make me
Envy my dead Lord, & almost Blaspheme
Those powers which heard my prayers for fruitfulness.
And did not with my first birth close my womb.
To me alone my second blessing proves my first,
My first of misery, for if heaven
That gave me Rollo, *there had stay'd his bounty,*
And Otto, *my dear* Otto *ne're had been,* Or

Or being had not been ſo worth my love;
The ſtream of my affection had run conſtant,
In one fair current all my hopes had been
Laid up in one, and fruitful Normandy
In this diviſion had not loſt her glories.
For as 'tis now, 'tis a fair Diamond
Which being preſerv'd entire, exceeds all value
But cut in pieces (though theſe pieces are
Set in fine gold by the beſt workmans cunning)
Parts with all eſtimation. So this Kingdom
As 'tis yet whole, the neighbouring Kings may covet
But cannot compaſs, which divided will
Become the ſpoil of every barbarous Foe
That will invade it.

The former ſpeech ſeems to ſhow a Woman of great ſpirit, labouring to contain her paſſion till ſhe may utter her mind: But this latter ſeems to preſent a *well-breath'd* and *practis'd Scold*, who vents her paſſion and eaſes her mind by talking, and can weep and talk everlaſtingly.

In that of *Julia* we find but one *thought*, yet that follow'd cloſe and preſs'd with all the vehemence that a ſtrong paſſion might inſpire; as may be eaſily apprehended by any who underſtand in *Virgil*,

It lachrymans, guttiſque humectat grandibus ora.

She is not content to ſay, divide me, but to lay the Image before their eyes, and make the ſtronger impreſſion. She will, *like the Sea and Land be divided*, be cut in two, be ſhar'd out to them, to each his moiety, &c.

But what a pother makes the old *Dutcheſs*? never *French* Author haſh'd and kickſhaw'd a little ſenſe into ſo many words that ſignifie nothing

thing. She manages as if she were to hold forth by the glass: Had her passion after the first three words burst out at her eyes, had she wept and torn her hair, her *Rhetorick* had been more moving, and better understood, and she had acquitted her self Heroickly: But she falls off immediately, as if she had bolted out some rash thing at first, and was afraid of being ta'ne at her word; her tongue runs over her passion, and steals into matters that lean another way, and she talks as if she would talk the impression of her first words quite out of the hearers heads again. After the three first words she flies from the only thought that was proper, high enough, and proportionable to her passion: she is for being split in as many pieces as there are *Villages* in *Normandy*; which expression scatters the thought, breaks the resemblance and carries all remote from the occasion, and must in effect move but very indifferently. From thence she plunges into such impertinent and inconsistent wild *jargon* as is obvious to

any man. That of the Diamond is a good thought in it ſelf; but in this place comes very cold from her mouth, 'tis no more than if ſhe had ſaid, *Divide the Dukedom, divide me firſt, nay divide a Diamond*, &c. Naturally in a great paſſion none have leiſure to ramble for compariſons, much leſs to compute the value of Diamonds whole or broken.

I queſtion not the *Grammar*, nor how Poetical the ſtile is, I reſt in the ſenſe, nor had yet been ſo particular, but that I take all this Tragedy to be of the ſame *piece* for the writing, unleſs that ſcene of the *Aſtrologers*; and the Comical part, than which nothing can be more diverting.

Speeches of more matter I confeſs we have in the Play, and to *Latorch* we are oblig'd for them.

No friends, Sir, to your honour,
Friends to your fall, where is your underſtanding
The noble veſſel that your full ſoul ſail'd in,

Ribb'd

Ribb'd round with honours, where is that? 'tis ruin'd.
The tempeſt of a womans ſighs has ſunk it.
Friendſhip, take heed, Sir, is a ſmiling Harlot,
That when ſhe kiſſes, kiſſes a ſoder'd friendſhip,
Piec'd out with Promiſes; O painted Ruine!

This *Latorch* alwaies *Cants* at this rate, and an extraordinary *Muſe* attends him. We may, I think, conclude the ſucceſs of this Play due chiefly to the Scenes for laughter, the merry jig under the Gallows, and where the Tragedy tumbles into the Kitchin among the Skoundrels that never ſaw buskin in their lives before. There the Pantler and Cook give it that reliſh which renders it one of the moſt followed entertainments in the Town.

A King and no King.

WELL fares it with Tragedy (ſays an (a) *old ſtager) the title is no ſooner known, but the Spectators ſee into the deſign, and agree what they are to expect. Name* Oedipus, *they know* Laius *was his Father,* Jocaſta *his Mother, and all the generation: ſo there needs no more but hold up a finger, the Curtain's drawn, and to't they go.*

But ill is our condition, we are fain to coin new words, explain what is paſt, preſent, and to come, yet never can be underſtood enough, and without this ado whether Phidon *or whether* Chremes *enters, he is hiſt off the Stage; when as* Teucer, Oedipus, *or* Peleus *might come with authority.*

(a) *Antiphanes* apud *Athen.*

Our

Our Authors we ſee, never make uſe of the advantage which that *Comedian* envy'd ſo much in Tragedy. This Title gives no more light into the deſign, then had they call'd it *Hocus Pocus*; and indeed the name ſeems rather to promiſe a *Comedy*, and one might expect ſome ſort of *Mammamouchy* King, or Cozen of *Duke Trinckelo's* for the Heroe of the Play.

The Plot is this:

The Queen of *Iberia*, *Arane*, had feign'd her ſelf with child, and made uſe of *Gobrias*'s Son to carry out the cheat. She afterwards proves truly with child, which came to be *Panthea*, durſt not diſcover the firſt cheat, ſo that *Arbaces* (*Gobria's* Son) became actually King, is made really ſo by marrying *Panthea*.

The reſt is all *Epiſode*.

In this Fable appears ſome proportion, ſhape, and (at the firſt ſight) an *outſide* fair enough, yet at the bottom we hardly find what is more choice, or more *exquiſite* and more

per-

perfect than Hiſtory. By the *turn* of the *Plot*, if we look on *Arane*, this Play might have been call'd *The Deceiver Deceiv'd*, if we look on *Arbaces*, the title might have been *The Fortunate Impoſtor*, *The lucky Sham*, or ſomething of that kind; which ſhows a want of that *good ſenſe* in it which Tragedy requires.

There might have been feigned ſome right to the Crown long conteſted between the two Families; (as ours of *York* and *Lancaſter*) and bloody civil war ready to break out; when unexpectedly all grew huſht and ended in a marriage; which (by a train long laid by *Gobrias*) took effect. This marriage ſhould not have ſeem'd ſo advantageous to the falſe King, and his Father who brought it about; but by manifeſt reaſons of *ſtate* appear'd abſolutely neceſſary for the good of the Kingdom, and above all things, deſired and labour'd for by the relations of *Panthea*.

Whereas on the contrary, we find the Queen Mother attempting to poiſon

ſon this uſurper, and ſee no reaſon to blame her endeavours.

What ſets this *Fable* below Hiſtory, are many *improbabilities*, and thoſe of the worſt ſort; becauſe they contribute nothing to the wonder. What more improbable, than that the Mother whoſe buſineſs it was to contrive the death of the Impoſtor, ſhould never caution or inform her only Daughter, who had the right to the Crown, that *Arbaces* was none of her Brother, but her vaſſal, and ſo obſtruct her love for him?

Nor is it likely that *Gobrias* ſhould not have reſerv'd ſome means to let his Son know the ſecret, that his Sons conduct and addreſſes to gain the Princeſs, might have been faſhion'd accordingly.

The Characters are all *improbable* and *unproper* in the higheſt degree, beſides that both theſe, their actions and all the *lines* of the Play run ſo wide from the *Plot*, that ſcarce ought could be imagin'd more contrary.

We blunder along without the leaſt ſtreak of light, till in the *laſt act* we ſtumble

ſtumble on the *Plot*, lying all in a lump together; neither any tolerable direction to guide us thither; nor ought ingenious, juſt, or reaſonable, that carries us from thence.

What find we in the Son of *Gobrias* that he muſt have the Princeſs and the Kingdom for her portion, ſave only that the Knave his Father will have it ſo?

Take his picture ſent before him, and drawn by a friend. --*He is vainglorious, and humble, and angry, and patient, and merry, and dull, and joyful, and ſorrowful, in extremity in an hour*--- Should we find underwritten *This is a King*, yet could not reaſon give way to our belief.

Kings of *Tragedy* are all Kings by the Poets *Election*, and if ſuch as theſe muſt be elected, certainly no *Poliſh* Diet would ever ſuffer Poet to have a voice in chooſing a King for them. Nor will it ſerve that *Arbaces* is not truly a King, for he is actually ſuch, and intended for a true and rightful King before the Poet has done with him, what wants in Birth

the

the Poet ſhould make up in his Merit, every one is to conſent and wiſh him King, becauſe the Poet deſigns him for one, 'tis (beſides) obſerv'd that Uſurpers generally take care to deſerve by their conduct what is deny'd them by right.

We are to preſume the greateſt vertues, where we find the higheſt of rewards; and though it is not neceſſary that all *Heroes* ſhould be Kings, yet undoubtedly all crown'd heads by *Poetical right* are *Heroes*. This Character is a flower, a prerogative, ſo certain, ſo inſeparably annex'd to the *Crown*, as by no Poet, no *Parliament* of Poets, ever to be invaded.

Arbaces indeed is of a different mould, he no ſooner comes on the Stage, but lays about him with his tongue at ſo nauſeous a rate, Captain *Beſſus* is all Modeſty to him, to mend the matter his friend ſhaking an empty skull, ſays *'Tis pity that valour ſhould be thus drunk*. Had he been content to brag only amongſt his own Vaſſals, the fault might be more ſufferable, but the King of *Armenia*

is

is his priſoner, he muſt bear the load of all; he muſt be ſwagger'd at, inſulted over, and trampl'd on without any provocation. We have a *Scene* of his ſufferings in each *Act* of the Play: *Bajazet* in the *Cage* was never ſo carried about, or felt half the barbarous indignities which are thrown on this unfortunate Prince by our monſter of a King.

If the Poet would teach that victory makes a man inſolent; he muſt at the ſame time make victory bluſh, and fly to the other ſide; as a juſt puniſhment for him that had abuſed her favours.

To the Queen-Mother his language is, *Plagues rot the adulterous Witch! thou worſe than Woman dam'd---ſtrumpet---whore!* &c. to his Father *Gobrias*;

Curſes incurable, and all the evils
Man's body or his ſpirit can receive,
Be with thee.

To the Princeſs *Panthea* his ſuppoſed

poſed Siſter, after having caſt her in Priſon, and a thouſand outrages very coarſly.

Arb. *I have beheld thee with a luſtful eye.*
My heart is ſet on wickedneſs, to act
Such ſins with thee, as I have been afraid
To think of. If thou dar'ſt conſent to this,
(Which I beſeech thee do not) thou mayſt gain
Thy liberty, and yield me a content:
If not, thy dwelling muſt be dark and cloſe.

Theſe ſpeeches, drawing his Sword at the Queen-Mother, and the other outrages, make the ſum of our *Heroes* vertues, and neither worſe nor better find we throughout his character. *Arbaces* ſhould have been conſider'd in a double capacity; he ſhould have been endu'd with all the greatneſs of mind, and *generoſity* of a King

a King, and alſo with the *modeſty* of a Subject. The want of which, is a great aggravation of his fauls; for his carriage towards the Royal Captive, towards the Queen-Mother, towards the Princeſs, as he was a King, were inſupportable, as *no King*, it was all abominable. Hiſtory ſometimes takes notice of a certain *inſtinct* which has ſtrangely hinder'd many unnatural actions. A Poet, I am ſure, ought always to have that *inſtinct*, or ſome good *genius* ready to ſerve his *Heroe* upon occaſion, to prevent theſe unpleaſant *ſhocking* indecencies, which otherwiſe might happen. This *inſtinct* ſhould in *Arbaces* have begot a reſpect to his Father *Gobrias*, and have humbl'd him in the preſence of ſuch as were truly of the *Blood Royal*.

And far from *decorum* is it, that we find the King *drolling* and quibling with *Beſſus* and his Buffoons, and worſe, that they ſhould preſume to break their little jeſts upon him.

This too is *natural*, ſome will ſay. There are in nature many things which

which *Hiſtorians* are aſham'd to mention, as below the dignity of an Hiſtory: Shall we then ſuffer a *Tom Coriat* in *Poetry*? Shall we on the moſt important day of a King's Reign, and at Court be content with ſuch entertainment as is not above a Cobler's ſhop? Might not a Poet as well deſcribe to us how the King eats and drinks, or goes to *Stool*; for theſe actions are alſo *natural*: but obſerve the behaviour of *Arbaces*, after that he is found to be *no King*. Now he will make amends, and give ſatisfaction to all he had wrong'd. To the Gentlemen about him.

Arb. *Why do you keep your hats off, Gentlemen?*
Is it to me? I ſwear it muſt not be.
Nay, truſt me, in good Faith it muſt not be.
I cannot now command you, but I pray you,
For the reſpect you bear me, when you took
Me for your King, each man clap

On his hat
At my desire.

And surely the Captive King cannot but be content, when told that

Arb. *He shall go so home, as never man went.*
Mardon. *Shall he go on's head?*
Arb. *He shall have Chariots easier than air,*
That I will have invented; and ne'r think
He shall pay any ransom: And thy self
That art the Messenger shalt ride before him
On an Horse cut out of an intire Diamond,
That shall be made to go with golden Wheels.
I know not how, yet.

For the Captive King's Mistress;

Arb. *She shall have some strange thing; we'l have the Kingdom*
Sold utterly, and put into a toy,

Which

Which ſhe ſhall wear about her careleſly
Somewhere or other.

Now, that he is no King, nor has ought to give, he is for ſelling all without asking leave of the true Sovereign *Panthea*. To her his Compliment is,

Arb. *Grant me one requeſt.*
Pant. *Alas, what can I grant you? what I can, I will.*
Arb. *That you will pleaſe to marry me.*
If I can prove it lawful.
Pant. *Is that all?*
More willingly than I would draw this air.

Should not rather the *Spirit* of *Majeſty* have now rouz'd up in the Princeſs, and ſhe have call'd to mind his late brutiſh inſolence, and have call'd him impudent Slave, and diſcharg'd a frown that ſhould have ſtruck him dead, or commanded him to be *nail'd* to the floor as *falſe* coin,

and a *counterfeit* ſtamp of Majeſty. And certainly his *character* could deſerve no better fate. But for his comfort, this Princeſs was none of thoſe. One might ſwear ſhe had a knock in the Cradle; ſo ſoft ſhe is at all points, and ſo ſilly. No *Linſey-woolſey* Shepherdeſs but muſt have more *ſoul* in her, and more ſenſe of *decency* (not to ſay) honour. To this Vaſſal of hers, on her knees for half an hour together, ſhe whines at this rate, *viz.*

Pan. *I know I am unworthy, yet not ill*
Arm'd, with which innocence I here will kneel
Till I am one with earth; but I will gain
Some words, and kind ones, from you.

Thus ſhe continues, and by and by he *kiſſes her thrice*, then calls her *Witch, Poiſoner, Traitor*, ſends her to Priſon; ſhe thanks him with all her heart.

Pan.

Nay, 'tis well the King is pleas'd with it.

At the next meeting ſhe will needs be cloſer and cloſer to him; he cannot keep her off him, he tells her he would commit *inceſt* with her: She returns a drawling, yawning, yielding anſwer; and proceeds to tell him, that ſhe wiſhes he were not her Brother, that ſhe loves him ſo well, ſhe can love no man elſe; ſhe ſhall weep her eyes out: and farther.

Pan. *But is there nothing elſe*
That we may do, but only walk? methinks
Brothers and Siſters lawfully may kiſs.

Had *Panthea* been ſome *Waſtcoat-teer* of the Village, that had been formerly *Complaiſant* with him beyond diſcretion, more vile ſubmiſſions ſhe could not deviſe: But as ſhe is lawful *Sovereign*, nothing could be invented more oppoſite to all *honeſty*,

honour, and *decorum*. If we conſider them as Brother and Siſter, 'tis horribly wicked. If we look on her as Sovereign, and him as her Subject, what can be more diſhonourable? So that if *inſtinct* guided their love, as lawful and warrantable; it may be anſwer'd, that the ſame *inſtinct* ſhould have prevented that love, as inſolent and preſumptuous in *Arbaces*, baſe and unbecoming in *Panthea*. For whether a Lady may better marry her Brother, or her Groom, is a queſtion more eaſily decided in Divinity, than in Poetry.

We are let to know that the Queen-Mother was for removing the Uſurper by poiſon, and for bringing all into the right channel agen. This we might expect to be a Woman *courageous*, and truly *Tragical*: yet we find her the verieſt *patient Griſſel* that ever had lain by a Monarch's ſide. She comes but thrice on the Stage; the firſt time ſhe is rebuk'd by *Gobrias*, with the ſame language that the *Vicar* of *Newgate* might diſpence to ſome *ſinner* forlorn; then ſhe is on her

her *mary-bones* to the Impoſtor without reluctancy. Laſtly, when provok'd with a drawn Sword, and words more cutting, the proudeſt rant ſhe could be rais'd to, was: --- *Fire conſume me if ever I was a Whore.*

If nothing elſe in the character of *Arbaces*, the drawing his *Sword* againſt a *Woman*, was enough in Poetry to damn him. After that *outrage*, he could make no pretenſions to ought that is good or honourable.

On this occaſion memorable is that paſſage in *Virgil*, where *Æneas* after having related, how the Town on fire about his ears,-- on the ſudden awak'd from his ſleep, -- flung headlong by rage and deſpair, -- forſaken by his reaſon, -- his friends ſlaughter'd about him, -- the King *Priam* murder'd before his face: -- when he ſpies the cauſe of all this, *Hellen*, skulking in a corner -- at the ſight of her.

Exarſere ignes animo, ſubit ira cadentem
Ulciſci patriam, & ſceleratas ſumere pœnas, &c.

All which, with what follows, comes to no more, than had he ſaid; -- In that nick of time I even made a queſtion within my ſelf, whether I was not to take revenge on her; to that degree of madneſs had my troubles wrought me.

Talia jactabam, & furiata mente ferebar.

Now here, this revenge goes no farther than his thoughts; theſe thoughts---- *Æneas* himſelf condemns, and calls them madneſs; and is alſo ſharply reprov'd for them by his *Guardian Angel*,

Nate, quis indomitas tantus furor excitat iras?
Quid furis?

No man but *Virgil* could ever pen any thing with that infinite care and caution as is this particular paſſage. One might think *Virgil* foreſaw whatever could be objected; and provided againſt all ſcruples.

Yet

Yet of ſuch a nice taſt were the *Criticks* in that *age* of *good ſenſe*; that *Varus* and *Tucca* ſtruck out all the 22 Verſes which contain this paſſage. Theſe were employ'd by *Auguſtus* to inſpect what (by the untimely death of *Virgil*) might have been left imperfect, and they durſt not ſuffer theſe 22 lines to paſs, though eſſential to the Poem; ſo tender they were, leſt their *Heroe* might lye under a ſuſpition of tranſgreſſing in any *punctilio* of that nature.

We need not make a controverſy whether *Virgil* or his *Criticks* be in the right: But if *Virgil* will not in a man allow the *thought* of ſtriking a Woman in any circumſtances, unleſs he condemns himſelf for that *thought*. And if his *Criticks* will not permit a *thought* of that kind with any *qualifications* whatſoever; then we may well conclude, that *Poetry* to be very *groſs*, where the *men* both think, and ſpeak, and act their *cruelties* againſt *Women*, without any ſhame or reſtraint.

But

But *Arbaces*, though mad, and flash'd upon by never so great a *hurrican* of provacations, was not to be allow'd to think of striking; because the Womans *quality* was above his, and made her sacred. Neither in this point is there a difference betwixt an *Epick* Poem and a *Tragedy*; when the conclusion of both is *prosperous*.

As here, *Æneas*, a King, of great merit, by the assistance of Heaven, and his friends, after much labour, marries *Lavinia*.

And *Arbaces*, no King, of no merit, without friends in Heaven, or on the Earth; without any trouble weds his King's only Daughter, and the Kingdom of *Iberia* is her portion.

I know with the Ancients, *Orestes* kill'd his Mother, *Hercules* his Wife and Children, *Agamemnon* his Daughter. But the first was an act of *Justice*; the second of *Frenzy*; the last of *Religion*. But these were all Tragedies unhappy in the *catastrophe*. And the business so well prepar'd; that every one might see, that these

Worthies

Worthies had rather have laid violent hands on themſelves, had not their *will* and choice been over-rul'd. Every ſtep they made, appear'd ſo contrary to their inclinations, as all the while ſhew'd them unhappy, and render'd them the moſt *deſerving* of pitty in the World.

Another *Canker* in the heart of this *Tragedy*, is the inceſtuous love (for ſuch it appears) between *Arbaces* and *Panthea*, I mean, the *conduct* of it. When any *deſign* on the *Stage* is in agitation, the Poet muſt take care that he engage the affections, take along the heart, and ſecure the good will of the Audience. If the *deſign* be wicked, as here the making approaches towards an *inceſtuous* enjoyment; the *Audience* will *naturally* loath and deteſt it, rather than favour or accompany it with their good wiſhes. 'Tis the ſad effects and conſequences of an ill *deſign* which the *Audience* love to have repreſented: 'tis then that the *penitence*, *remorſe* and *deſpairs* move us: 'tis then that we grieve with the ſorrowful,

ful, and weep with thoſe that weep.

Therefore were the Ancients to make an *inceſtuous* love their ſubject; they would *take* it in the *fall*, as it rowls down headlong to deſperation and miſery.

Many in the *World* for their intereſt may comply and help forward the *advances* towards an ill action; but on the *Stage* there is no kindred nor filthy lucre to biaſs the *Audience*, or make them partial to the evil-doer. If the Poet obſerve not theſe meaſures, the *working up of a Scene*, is plainly the tormenting of nature, and holding our ears to the *Grindſtone*.

For an inceſtuous love, famous amongſt the Ancients, was the *tale* of *Macareus* and *Canace*. In the liſt of thoſe Tragedies wherein *Nero* delighted to be an *Actor*, *Suetonius* reckons *Canace parturiens*. The title may ſatisfy us, that all the ſoft things, all the amours, the flowers and *fleurets* were over, e're the Offenders entred on the *Stage*.

In

In this laſt age a noble (*) *Italian* compos'd a Tragedy of *Canace* after the *model* of the Ancients; for the time of the *action*: he alſo chooſes the day of *Canaces labour*. And then the pangs of child-bearing are the eaſieſt that ſhe ſuffers. For, to heighten the diſgrace, this Poet feigns *Macareus* and *Canace* to be *Twins*, and this day to have been their birth day, which the King, their Father, is about to ſolemnize with a Feſtival. Immediatly we find the two Offenders (under their apprehenſion of being diſcover'd) in the greateſt confuſion and deſpair imaginable. But that we might more juſtly pitty them, he informs us, that their crime proceeded not from any folly or miſcarriage in themſelves which they might have avoided; but that a (†) *reſiſtleſs power above*, and Cœleſtial force had over-rul'd them: that indeed *Venus*

(*) *Speroni Sperone.*

(†) *Non malattia mortale,*
Mà fa celeſte forza
Non propria elettione,
Mà un impeto fatal.——

had

had an old reck'ning with their *Father Æolus*, for perſecuting her *Æneas*, and thus ſhe diſcharg'd it with a *vengeance*.

By the rule of the Antients no colours, no ſophiſtry or ribaldry's, were us'd to leſſen a crime before it was committed: for then their Rhetorick could have no good effect, but muſt have *grated* on the hearers patience. But after the fact, when its puniſhment came heavy upon it, then all their art and invention was at work, to find out circumſtances to extenuate the guilt, that the perſons *guilty* might be capable of *pity*.

Arbaces in the diſhoneſt love to his Siſter, ſhould have follow'd the example of that *Antiochus* in the Hiſtory, who in love with his *Stepmother*, diſcover'd not his paſſion by any words or *gallantries*; but pin'd away, and gave himſelf over to dye; and had dy'd, if the dexterity of his Phyſitian had not by feeling his *Pulſe* learnt the cauſe of his diſtemper.

The better to cleer this matter, I will trace the manners and conduct of

of *Phedra* in *Euripides*, where we are told that *Hippolytus* having too rudely ſlighted the Altars of *Venus*, ſhe is offended, and will have the whole Family feel the effects of her reſentment. To bring this about, ſhe ſtrikes *Phedra* with a poiſon'd dart, and makes her in love with this *Hippolytus*, her Son in Law. *Phedra* conceals her love, ſtrives to overcome it, not prevailing, reſolves to (a) kill her ſelf by faſting. And now for three days had ſhe neither eat nor ſlept, when ſhe firſt appears on the Stage. No wonder then if ſhe talks very madly, ſhe is in an hundred minds all at once, ſhe tries all places and all poſtures, and is always uneaſie in the preſent. *Now her dreſs is a pain to her, and now ſhe will be carry'd to her Cloſet and ſhut up cloſe, inſtantly agen, ſhe calls to have her locks tied back, and nothing but the garb of an Amazon will pleaſe her, then ſhe would ſleep in ſome grott, and drink the waters from a moſſie foun-*

(a) Ἀσιτεῖ δ' ὡς ἀπόσασιν βίου.

tain.

tain. Now ſhe cries for the open air, for ranging the hills, for driving the woods, for whooping the dogs, for chaſing the Stag, and brandiſhing a Javelin: and ah that the horſes were ready to mount. Now ſhe complains of her diſtraction, and blames ſome (b) *Divine power; and now her face is loaded with ſhame, confuſion and tears. Hide me (ſhe cries) ah hide me from the world, it pains her (ſhe ſays) to return to her right ſenſes.*

Here is a *Scene* of *Madneſs*, but not of *Bedlam*-madneſs; here is *Nature*, but not the *obſcenities*, not the *blind-ſides* of Nature, which are repreſented when *Arbaces* and *Panthea* go *looſe* together, and whether of the two Madneſſes is the more apt to move *pity*, need not certainly be a queſtion.

Hitherto cannot the Governeſs, Confident, or *Nurſe* of *Phedra*, underſtand where *Phedra* is pincht. She ſifts, importunes and conjures her, yet

(b) Ἐμάνην ὕπνου δαίμονος ἄτᾳ.

after

after all is no wiſer till accidentally amongſt other arguments whereby ſhe would perſwade *Phedra* to live, *Live*, ſays ſhe, *otherwiſe you betray your Children to be Lorded over by that other womans Baſtard, this* Amazon's *Son, I mean* Hippolytus; *woes me*, ſays *Phedra*, *you have undone me! name him no more.* The Nurſe proceeds to torture her with queſtions, and *Phedra* returns as many perplexed anſwers, till at the laſt ſays *Phedra*,

Phed. *What is it that men call to be in love?*

Nurſe. *It is of all things the ſweeteſt, and alſo the moſt bitter.*

Phed. *I have ſufficiently experienc'd both.*

Nurſe. *What ſays my Child, do you love any Man?*

Phed. *Who is that ſame, that of the* Amazon?

Nurſe. *Say you* Hippolytus?

Phed. *This from your ſelf you hear; but not from me.*

Alas! undone! intolerable, cries the Nurſe, and ſhe will not live one moment longer. And concludes that all, (even modeſt women too againſt their will) would be naught, and that Love is the veryeſt god almighty; there is not the fellow of him in all the heavenly gang.

I have only cited the concluſion of this *Scene*, to note the utmoſt *advances* of *Phedra* towards a confeſſion, the only crime of which ſhe was guilty; and to ſhow that this Nurſe (ſo long kept in ignorance) was no fool, but ſubtle and nimble enough to catch and run away with the leaſt *hint* that could be offer'd.

In the former Scene all the conflict was between love and modeſty; this preſents *love* and an active *friendſhip* join'd, both at once labouring to ſubdue this *modeſty*, ſo far only as to extort a confeſſion. The *Nurſe* with wrung hands lies at *Phedra's* feet, embraces her knees, begs her to live, for her Childrens ſake to live, and tell her pain. *Phedra* ſtrives, would be from the Nurſes hands, complains of the

the violence, promiſes to tell, yet raves and rambles, ſpeaks ſhort and ambiguous, all is darkneſs; whileſt every where tenderneſs, paſſion and modeſty reign, and appear to admiration.

This *Scene* having wrought off the *Remains* of *Phedra's* frenzy, in the next ſhe ſeems more calm, her mind more at eaſe, and now will move *pity* from a new *Topick*, for now this unfortunate Lady is found to be a woman of *great ſenſe* and underſtanding. *She reaſons (to the Chorus) and wonders how humane life becomes ſo corrupt, for certainly (ſays ſhe) it cannot be natural to do amiſs, when we underſtand what is right. Yet thus it happens, we have before our eyes, and know what is good, but we practiſe otherwiſe. Some out of ſloath, and others preferring a kind of pleaſure before honeſty; there be many pleaſures of life, as converſation, eaſe a ſweet evil, and modeſty. Now there are two ſorts of pleaſure, one good, this other the bane of Families: but would this appear always in its true*

colours, 'twould no longer be counted pleaſure. Theſe things when I conſider'd, I thought no Philter *could ever ſeduce me to act againſt my knowledge.*

But to open my mind to you, after love had wounded me, I caſt with my ſelf how I might bear my illneſs the moſt decently, and from that time made it my care to hide my diſtemper and keep it to my ſelf. Secondly, I reſolv'd to get my right ſenſes again, and with chaſtity to overcome my frenzy. In the third place, if the attempt to cure my diſtemper prov'd vain, I then thought my beſt courſe would be to dye.

For I know the diſeaſe to be infamous, and eſpecially in me a woman, odious to all people.

Then ſhe curſes thoſe *who firſt polluted the Marriage-bed.* And *hates the baggages that can talk ſo ſmoothly, and yet will do naughty things in a corner.* (a) *Bleſſed Lady,* ſays *ſhe,*

(a) Πῶς ποτ' ὦ δέσποινα πονηία κώπει.

how

how can they look their husbands in the face? how can they but tremble at their (b) *confederate darkneſs? and be afraid that the very* (c) *walls and doors ſhould open and cry whore at 'um.*

She concludes, *Therefore dear friends, this ſame ſhall kill me, that I may never be taken to diſgrace my Husband, and the Children I have brought forth.*

The *Nurſe* perceiving her Miſtreſs thus reſolute, ſets her tongue a running to this purpoſe.

Lady (quoth ſhe) I was lately in a twittering fear for you,
But now I confeſs my ſelf hen-hearted.
It has been ſaid, that ſecond thoughts are the wiſeſt.
And now (believe me) there is nothing ſingular,

(b) ——τὸν συνεργάτην.

(c) ——τέρεμνα τ' ὄικων.

Nothing unreaſonable in your caſe.
The truth is, the goddeſs is terrible angry at you.
Well, you love? that's no marvel.
And you would kill your ſelf for love.
That wou'd be a pleaſant pranck, if all that are,
And that are to be in love muſt preſently take that courſe.
There is no ſtriving,
No dodging with love, when it comes in earneſt.
'Tis eaſie to thoſe that are yielding.
But if you will be goodly, and think high of your ſelf,
If you will reſiſt and be ſtubborn,
Why, then there's no whoo with it,
It ſhakes and breaks, and thunders you to Atoms immediately.
Love is King of the air,
Whizz goes his power through the blew ſeas,

And

And we are all of us his off-ſpring.
They who have read the Chronicles,
Or are skill'd in antient Ballades,
Can tell us ſtories of Jupiter, Semele, Cephalus.
Of ſuch love, and ſuch wild lovers as you wou'd think ſtrange at.
*Yet theſe Lovers (many of them) were * prefer'd in heaven,*
And now are waiting at gods ell-bow.
The gods melted with their ſufferings, cou'd not be angry.
And now you will be in a fit.
You cannot be content with the ſame Laws,
With the ſame Nature, with fleſh and blood, like other folks.
You ſhould have been hatchd' in Jupiter's *brain,*

* ἀλλ' ὅμως ἐν οὐρανῷ

ναίουσι, καὶ φεύγουσιν ἐκποδῶν θεούς.

And ſo been fram'd ſome bleſſed Angel.
How many men who are right in their ſenſes,
See their bed tumbl'd, yet walk on,
And lets it trouble their heads no further.
'Tis nine points of wiſdom to keep that ſecret,
Which would be no credit, when divulg'd.
Perfection is an aiery notion, never to be found in practice.
Then ſurely they are well hop't up,
Who ſet themſelves to live (a) exactly.
As this world goes, if our good deeds out-tell the bad,
We ſhall make an handſome reck'ning.
Then, dear Child, be no longer in an ill mind,
For the goddeſs has an heavy pique againſt you.
And truſt not that ſhe will be check-mated by you.

(a) ἀκριβῶσαι.

Nor

Nor think you to be higher than
the higheſt of all:
For ſuch, in effect, is your laſt reſo-
lution.
And, to tell you plainly, 'tis an af-
front to 'em.
Then pluck up a good heart,
And love on; ſince (b) *God will*
have it ſo.
You have a wound, cure your wound.
There are Spells, and Charms, and
(c) *healing words,*
Some remedy ſhall be found out for
you.
And truly, if we Women cannot
adviſe you,
The wit of man will come too late.

The *Nurſe* here delivers all the *good ſenſe* that could be proper for the occaſion, as may be diſcern'd, notwithſtanding the ill dreſs, in which I have diſguis'd it. A leſs conſidering Poet would have diſplaid all this *dialogue-wiſe*, and made it a Scene of

(b) ——Θεὸς ἐβούλήθη τάδε.

(c) ——λόγοι θελκτήριοι.

mighty

mighty ſputter. But *Euripides* would not ſuffer his *Phedra* ſo far to countenance or liſten to theſe lewd reaſons, as once to think they deſerv'd any particular anſwer. To diſpute in a matter of this kind, would have been the next door to the being convinc'd: and to contend, was to put her ſelf in the way of being overcome. She therefore at once makes this return.

Ph. *'Tis thus that Towns and Kingdoms are deſtroy'd,*
By a fair tongue and flattering ſpeech decoy'd:
We ſhould not file our words to pleaſe the ear;
But ſtrike the mind, and kindle glory there.

To make ſhort, *the Nurſe tells her that wiſe* ſentences *will not do the buſineſs: that, for her part, ſhe would not be the miniſter of any ones pleaſure: but in this extremity, where life is at ſtake, ſhe might without blame for a violent diſeaſe, provide an extraordinary Cure.* Phe-

Phedra calls theſe *horrible, filthy ſpeeches*; and commands *her to* (*) *lock up her mouth.*

The Nurſe urges *that her words, if they are not clean, they are wholſome; and the preſervation of life was of more importance than any proud name ſhe would boaſt on in her death.*

But ſhe (finding that this ſort of diſcourſe did the more exaſperate and provoke her Miſtreſs) recants. *But* (ſays ſhe) *now that it comes in my mind, I have at home* (†) *healing Philters that will work your Cure without touching upon your modeſty.*

Phedra is in fear, makes ſcruples, asks queſtions; which the Nurſe evades, and tells her, *ſhe wanted not to be inſtructed, but to be aſſiſted.*

In the next *Scene Phedra* is on the Stage, and over-hears the Nurſe within, exchanging ſome words with *Hippolytus*: whereupon ſhe cries out,

(*) οὐχὶ συγκλείσεις στόμα

(†) ἔστιν κατ' οἴκους φίλτρα μοι θελκτήρια.

ſays,

ſays, ſhe is betraid, curſes the Nurſe, and reſolves to kill her ſelf. And now the apprehenſions that *Hippolytus* would accuſe her to his Father, made her write a Letter, laying all the blame on *Hippolytus*, as the beſt expedient (that amidſt her diſtractions, ſhe could on the ſudden deviſe) to *ſecure* her *honour*, and to prevent the *diſgrace* of her *Family*, and of her *Children*: and with this Letter in her hand, ſhe hangs her ſelf.

Had ſome Author of the laſt age given us the character of *Phedra*, they (to thicken the *Plot*) would have brought her in burning of Churches, poiſoning her Parents, proſtituting her ſelf to the Grooms, ſolliciting her Son face to face, with all the importunity and impudence they could imagin; and never have left dawbing ſo long as there might remain the leaſt cranny for either *pitty* or *probability*. They would never have left her, till ſhe had ſwell'd to ſuch a *Toad*, as nothing but an *audience* of *braſs* could fit the ſight of her.

But (for our credit) *Seneca*, before

us,

us, in this *blind* way of *deſigning* made no inconſiderable progreſs. We find his *Phedra* at the firſt daſh juſtifying her *inceſtuous* love: and her Nurſe is the Woman of *ſentences*; who labours with all the wholſome adviſe, the ſenſe and nonſenſe ſhe could ſcrape together, to *maul* this monſtrous luſt that rag'd in her Nurſling, *Phedra*. And whilſt ſhe goes on without any ſigns of ſucceſs, *Phedra* ſurpriſes her, (on the ſudden) reſolving to *dye* with a good name. Whereupon the Nurſe bids her be patient, and promiſes to try what ſhe can do with the young man.

Without more words, the next *Scene* preſents us *Phedra*, (as if the late reſolution had never been made) all upon the *gallantry*, ſhe is tricking her ſelf up in *Maſquerade*; and thus ſhe hopes to win the Salvage *Hippolytus*, and the Nurſe and ſhe make their ſupplications to the Goddeſs of *Chaſtity* to help on their deſign. And now it is that the Nurſe attacks him: but how? ſhe expounds to him at large, that a *City-life* and *Women* are a com-

a comfortable *importance*; he anſwers in another *harangue*, that nothing is like to the *ranging* in the Countrey: and truly (for *Women*) he hates them all mortally. During this conference, *Phedra* reels in amongſt them, falls in a ſwoun; and well is it for her that ſhe is taken up in the arms of her beloved Son: therefore ſhe takes heart, and puts it to him couragiouſly. But words proving vain, ſhe will needs (*a*) *raviſh* the poor ſtripling. Hereupon, to cut her neck off, he draws out the brown Faulcheon, (*b*) on which ſhe laying her ſweaty palms, he cries foh! flings it from him, and runs away. And now the Nurſe puts in her word, and ſays, *marry*, 'tis the beſt way to be before-hand with him, and to cry Whore firſt. Accordingly they fly to *Theſeus*, *Phedra* tells him that *Hippolytus* not only purpoſed, but had (*c*) effected his filthy pur-

(a) *Etiam in amplexus ruit? Stringatur enſis.*

(b) *Contactus enſis deſerat caſtum latus.*

(c) *Vim tamen corpus tulit.*

poſe

poſe upon her body, do ſhe what ſhe could: and *ecce ſignum* ſhews the Sword to witneſs for her truth. Hereupon *Theſeus* diſpatches his Son *Hippolytus* into another World. And now (with a canker to her) comes *Phedra*, confeſſes the truth indeed, and kills her ſelf.

Now in this *Phedra* of *Seneca*, what one occaſion of *pitty* have we? what ground for *terror*? and, above all, what *manners* have we? ask the generality of Women if they are mov'd and concern'd, if their hearts and good will go along and attend the thoughts and motions of this *Phedra*? will they not anſwer that they know no ſuch Woman, that ſhe is no way a kin to them, nor has any reſemblance with their nature? She muſt be ſome brat of a *Succubus*, or an evil *Spirit*, (ſay they) that perſonates a Woman; or ſome *Devil* in a *Machine*, that comes to render the Sex odious. Nor can they allow her more compaſſion than to a Bitch, or *Polecat*, and what has no relation to human ſhape.

Nor

Nor can this be a cauſe of *terror*: for few Women would be apt to fancy that they could (in any circumſtances) be ſo wicked as this *Phedra*. Each will ſay, were it my fate, or ſhould I be curſt to love where I ought not, I would certainly conceal my love, and ſtrive with it, my thoughts, words, and actions, and all, my condition might be every way the ſame, or very like to that of *Phedra* in *Euripides*. But I could never ſpeak or act at this impudent abominable rate, could never be transform'd to ſuch a monſter as this *Phedra* of *Seneca*. And ſince my conduct would not be the ſame, my caſe can never be the ſame; and conſequently this *example* cannot move or concern, or have any operation to ſtir either *pitty* or *terror* in me.

I have been the more large on this matter, becauſe it may ſerve as a certain and general *teſt*, whereby may be diſcover'd what is *naturally* apt to move *pitty* or *terror*. And this is founded on a Philoſophy never contraverted, but alike current at *Malmsbury* as at *Athens*. Eve-

Every one have noted *Seneca* for his *unnatural* way of writing. Yet, beſides what is already obſerv'd in his *characters*, I cannot leave him, without reminding you, that though he takes all his *thoughts* from *Sophocles* and *Euripides*, yet he rarely affords us any of their *good ſenſe*. He crumbles every *thought* into all the little *points* that ever he can ſtrain it to; and all theſe *points* (for, or againſt him, it matters not) muſt one way or other be apply'd.

Whenſoever he finds a *Diamond*, he forces, and breaks it into an hunder'd pieces; never letting it reſt ſo long as any of it will *ſparkle*. I deſire your patience but for one inſtance of this kind.

In the *Scene* where the *Nurſe* preſſes to know what it is that pains her Miſtreſs; amongſt her other ravings, ſays *Phedra* in *Euripides*.

(a) *What ſort of love lov'dſt thou, oh wretched Mother?*

(a) Ὦ τλῆμον, οἷον μῆτερ ἠράσθης ἔρον

And thou, unhappy Siſter, Wife of Bacchus?
The third unhappy, I.

The Poet made *Phedra* ſay this, not only, as a proper and *natural* reflection, that theſe extravagant loves run in the blood; but as a *hint* of her diſeaſe, and withal ſo *qualifi'd*, as might alſo ſhew her *modeſty*: for ſhe puts leſs in the *concluſion* than was in the *premiſſes*. She *concludes* to the *unhappineſs* only, and does not (as ſhe might) ſay.

And now the third unhappy Lover, I.

We find *Seneca* baiting this *thought* ſix ſeveral times in one *Scene*, and we have at leaſt, 40 lines in the Tragedy all meer *deſcant* upon it.

Ph. *Fatale* (a) *miſeræ matris agnoſco malum,*
Peccare noſter novit in ſylvis amor, &c.

Phed.

Ph. *Aut quis juvare* (b) *dædalus*
flammas queat, &c.
Nat.----- (c) *Quid domum infamem*
gravas
Superaſq; matrem?
Nat. (e) *Memorq; matris metue*
concubitus novos.
Nu. *Cur monſtra ceſſant? aula cur*
fratris vacat?
Prodigia toties orbis inſueta au-
diet,
Natura toties legibus cedat ſuis,
Quoties *Amabit* Creſſa?
Nu. *Patris memento:* Ph. (d) *Me-*
minimus matris ſimul.
Nu. *Adoritq; genitor.* Ph. *Mitis*
(f) Ariadnæ *pater.*
Hipp. *O majus auſa matre mon-*
ſtrifera malum,
Genetrice peior! illa ſe tantum ſtu-
pro
Contaminavit, & tamen tacitum
diu
Crimen biformi partus exhibuit
nota;
Sceluſq; matris arguit vultu truci
Ambiguus infans; ille te venter
tulit.

Ph. ---------- *Aut quis* Creſſius
(e) *Dædalea vaſto Clauſtra mugitu replens*
Taurus biformis, ore Cornigero ferox
Divulſit ?

The *thought* in *Euripides* was good and juſt enough ; but here we have it hall'd, and pull'd, and toſt, and tumbl'd about, in all poſtures and figures, and in all colours but the right. Obſerve but how a *a propos* the *Heroine* firſt ſtarts it. *No wonder* (ſays ſhe) *if my love goes to the* (a) *wood, ſeeing my Mother was gallanted by a Bull*; this brings her the ready way to (*b*) *Dædalus* and the *labyrinth*, where both ſhe and the Poet are loſt together. One might think, it would well enough ſerve from the Nurſes mouth for an (*c*) uſe of reproof : till ſhortly after we find it a (*d*) *turn-coat*, and muſter'd up by *Phedra* in the way of an excuſe. The reſt are all wide from ſenſe and ſobriety, as (*e*) *the huge bellowings that fill'd the Dedalian Cloyſters.*

This

This may ſuffice for *Seneca*, and *Phedra*, with whom I had not ſo long digreſs'd, but that I had *Panthea* in mine eye all the while. Nor ſhould I have judg'd *Panthea* worth all this ado, but that ſhe has many proper Couſins on the Stage. And theſe vile characters have ſo long proſper'd, that they bear high, and are fairly on to paſs for excellencies.

But I grow weary of this Tragedy: In the former I took *Latorch* by his mouth, and ranting air for a copy of *Caſſius* in *Shakeſpear*: and that you may ſee *Arbaces* here, is not without his *Caſſian* ſtrokes.

Thus *Caſſius* in *Shakeſpear*.

Caſſ.---- Brutus *and* Cæſar! *what ſhould there be in that* Cæſar!
Why ſhould that name be ſounded more than yours?
Write them together, yours is as fair a name:
Sound them; it doth become the mouth as well:

Weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with them, man:
Brutus *will ſtart a Spirit as well as* Cæſar.
Now, in the name of all the Gods at once,
Upon what meat doth this our Cæſar *feed,*
That he is grown ſo great? ----

Thus *Arbaces.*

Arb. *I have liv'd*
To conquer men, and now am overthrown
Only by words, Brother and Siſter; where
Have thoſe words dwelling? I will find 'em out,
And utterly deſtroy 'em: but they are
Not to be graſp'd: let 'em be men or beaſts,
I will cut 'em from the earth; or Towns,
And I will raze 'em, and then blow 'em up:

Let

Let 'em be Seas, and I will drink 'em off,
And yet have unquench'd fire within my breast:
Let 'em be any thing but meerly voice.

Would not theſe raptures have put Sir *Will. Petty* in mind of the *Iriſh* Inſcription?

FOR FIERCENESS AND FOR FURIOUSNESS,--

MEN CALL ME THE QUEENS MORTER-PIECE.

The buſineſs of the *Maids Tragedy* is this;

AMintor *contracted to* Aſpatia (Callianax's *Daughter*) *by the King's command, marries* Evadne, *Siſter to* Melanthius; *and expects to lye with her; but the Bride (mincing nothing) flatly tells him that he is but taken for a Cloak; that She, indeed, is a Bedfellow only for the King. The good man is perſwaded to diſſemble all, till his friend* Melanthius *extorts from him the ſecret: and thereupon hectors his Siſter* Evadne *into repentance, and makes her promiſe to murder the King. Which ſhe effects: in the mean time, by vexing* Callianax, Melanthius *prevails with him to deliver up the Fort, (wherein conſiſted the ſtrength of the Kingdom,) and ſo provides for his own ſecurity.* Lyſimachus, *Brother*

ther to the murder'd King, ſucceeds on the Throne, and pardons all. Evadne *would now go to bed with her Huſband, he refuſes, ſhe kills her ſelf.* Aſpatia *in mans habit kicks her Sweetheart* Amintor, *duels him, and is kill'd; and now* Amintor *kills himſelf to follow her: at which ſight, his friend* Melanthius *would alſo take the ſame courſe, but is prevented.*

Here we find *Amintor* falſe to his Miſtreſs; and this fault is the ſource of all the revolutions in this Tragedy.

Amintor therefore ſhould have named the Tragedy, and ſome additional title ſhould have hinted the Poet's deſign.

But ſeeing the *Maid* comes in at the latter end, only, to be kill'd for company; and ſeeing the King is the perſon of greateſt importance, is the greateſt loſer and concern'd in the action of the Play more than enough. And ſeeing that the new King *Lyſimachus* in the cloſe of the Tragedy makes this ſober concluſion, ſays he;

May

May this a fair example be to me,
To rule with temper: for on luſtful Kings
Unlookt-for ſudden deaths from heaven are ſent.
But curſt is he that is their inſtrument.

From theſe conſiderations we might gather that the Poets intent was to ſhow the diſmal conſequences of *fornication.* And if ſo, then the Title of the Tragedy ſhould have related to the King.

Whil'ſt thus we are uncertain what ought to be the *title*, we may ſuſpect that the *Action* of the Tragedy is *double*, where there ſeem two centers, neither can be right; and the lines leading towards them muſt all be falſe and confus'd; the *preparation* I mean, and conduct muſt be all at random, ſince not directed to any one certain end.

But what ever the Poet deſign'd; nothing in *Hiſtory* was ever ſo *unnatural,*

tural, nothing in *Nature* was ever ſo *improbable*, as we find the whole conduct of this Tragedy, ſo far are we from any thing accurate, and Philoſophical as Poetry requires.

This will appear as we examin the particular actions and Characters apart.

Our Poet here gives to the great Comical *Booby Callianax*, the honour of a long name with a King at th'end on't, yet lets the King himſelf go without. But ſince he muſt be nameleſs we may treat him with the greater freedom,and to tell my mind, certainly God never made a King with ſo little wit, nor the devil with ſo little grace, as is this King *Anonymus*.

A King of Hiſtory might marry his Concubine to another man for a Maid; might hinder that man from the enjoyment. But would not then turn them into the bed-chamber to be all night together; nor would come in the morning to interrogate and queſtion him,and torture the ſoul of him, as we find in this Tragedy,

nor

nor would impoſe it on a huſband thus affronted, whom he calls *honeſt* and *valiant*, to be the pimp to his bride. To have taken *Amintors* head off had been clemency in compariſon of theſe outrages without any cauſe or colour. And how wiſe the King was in all this, may be judg'd from his own mouth, finding the huſband contented and all quiet, the King (jealous that *Evadne* had not obſerv'd covenants) thus taxes her.

Do not I know the uncontrolled thoughts
That youth brings with him, when his blood is high
With expectation and deſire of that
He long had waited for? is not his ſpirit
Though he be temperate of a valiant ſtrain,
As this our age has known? what could he do,
If ſuch a ſudden ſpeech had met his blood,

But

But ruine thee for ever? if he had
not kill'd thee,
He could not bear it thus; he is
as we.
Or any other wronged man.

As if ſhe had ſaid, you have *Evadne*, you have broken Articles with me; it cannot be otherwiſe; for had you kept them, fleſh and blood could not endure the affront, and he is ſuch a man as would have cut us all to pieces in revenge. The danger being ſo cleer and certain, and a thouſand ſafe courſes before his noſe, why ſhould he ſtumble on this? never was a King of Hiſtory ſo errant a fool and madman.

In framing a Character for Tragedy, a Poet is not to leave his reaſon, and blindly abandon himſelf to follow fancy; for then his fancy might be monſtrous, might be ſingular and pleaſe no body's *maggot* but his own, but reaſon is to be his guide, reaſon is common to all people, and can never carry him from what is Natural.

Many are apt to miſtake *uſe* for *nature*,

nature, but a Poet is not to be an Hiſtoriographer, but a Philoſopher, he is not to take *Nature* at the *ſecond hand*, ſoyl'd and deform'd as it paſſes in the cuſtomes of the unthinking vulgar.

The (a) *Phedra* in *Euripides* told us truly that it is *not Natural to do evil when we know good.* Therefore vice can never pleaſe unleſs it be painted and dreſs'd up in the colours and diſguiſe of vertue, and ſhould any man knowingly and with open eyes prefer what is evil, he muſt be reckon'd the (b) greateſt of Monſters, and in no wiſe be lookt on as any image of what is Natural, or what is ſuitable with humane kind.

What is there of the *Heroe*, of Man, or of Nature in theſe Kings of our Poets framing? And for *Evadners*

(a) καίμοι δόκουσιν οὐ κατὰ γνώμης φύσιν πράσσειν κάκιον.

(b) *—majus eſt monſtro nefas*
Nam monſtra fato, moribus ſcelera imputes.

Sen.

part,

part, did Hell ever give reception to ſuch a Monſter? or *Cerberus* ever wag his tayl at an impudence ſo *ſacred*?

On the Wedding night the Bridegroom is cajol'd by her in no better terms than.

Evad. *A mayden-head*, Amintor, *at my years?*
Alas, Amintor, *thinkeſt thou I forbear*
To ſleep with thee, becauſe I have put on
A Mayden ſtrictneſs; look upon theſe cheeks
And thou ſhalt find the hot and riſing blood
Unapt for ſuch a vow; no, in this heart
There dwells as much deſire, and as much will
To put that wiſh't act in practice, as ever yet
Was known to woman, and they have been ſhown
Both; but it was the folly of thy youth,

To

To think this beauty (to what land ſo e're
It ſhall be call'd) ſhall ſtoop to any ſecond.
I do enjoy the beſt, and in that height
Have ſworn to ſtand or dye.

Soon after ſhe tells him.

Alas I muſt have one
To Father Children, and to bear the name
Of husband to me, that my ſin may be
More honourable.

Hitherto ſhe is baſhful, after this the *Scene* is to be *wrought* up, and the next Scene preſents her impudence *triumphant*; but I ſhall trace her duty towards her husband no farther.

Had *Evadne* been the injur'd bodies ſiſter, and had marry'd *Amintor* out of revenge, or had their been any foundation from circumſtances for this ſort of carriage, the Character then might have been contriv'd plauſible enough; but both the Kings be-

behaviour and hers, uncircumſtanc'd as we have them, are every way ſo harſh and againſt Nature, that every thing ſaid by them ſtrikes like a dagger to the ſouls of any reaſonable *audience*.

Whatever perſons enter upon the Stage the Poetry would be groſs enough if the audience could not by the *manners* diſtinguiſh in what Country the *Scene* lay; whether in *England*, *Italy*, or *Turky*: more groſs would it be if the manners would not diſcover which were men and which the women.

Now Nature knows nothing in the *manners* which ſo properly and particularly diſtinguiſhes woman as doth her modeſty, conſonant therefore to our principles and Poetical, is what ſome writers of Natural Hiſtory have reported; that women when drowned ſwim with their faces downwards, though men on the contrary.

Tragedy cannot repreſent a woman without modeſty as natural and eſſential to her.

If a woman has got any accidental hiſtorical impudence, if documented in the School of *Nanna* or *Heloiſa*, ſhe is furniſh'd with ſome ſtock of acquired impudence, ſhe is no longer to ſtalk in Tragedy on her high ſhoes; but muſt rub off and pack down with the Carriers into the *Provence* of Comedy, there to be kickt about and expos'd to laughter.

There are degrees of modeſty. *Evadne* and every perſon feign'd ought to be repreſented with more modeſty then *Phedra* or *Semiramis*, becauſe the Hiſtory makes it credible that theſe had leſs of modeſty then Naturally is inherent to the Sex, yet ought theſe alſo to ſhow more of modeſty then is ordinarily ſeen in men, that the Characters might ſtill be diſtinguiſh'd.

But (of all) the Kings murder is attended with thoſe circumſtances, with ſuch a knot of abſurdity and injuſtice, that I don't well know where to begin to unravel it.

This King indeed is born a Monſter, a Monſter of great hopes, and what

what might we not have expected from him? yet certainly the Poet cuts him off, e're ripe for puniſhment.

And by ſuch unproper means, that to remove one guilty perſon he makes an hundred; and commits the *deadly* ſins to puniſh a *venial* one.

If *Amintors* falſhood and its fatal conſequences are to be noted, what occaſion have we for a King in this Tragedy? cannot *Corydon* deceive his *Amarillis* (for ſuch is *Aſpatia*) but the King muſt know of it, the King muſt be murder'd for't?

To vex this falſe man, a Groom might have done the job, and have been the Poets Cuckold-maker to all intents and purpoſes every jot as well.

If it be ſaid that the King was acceſſary to the falſhood, I queſtion whether in Poetry a King can be an acceſſary to a crime, if the King commanded *Amintor*; *Amintor* ſhould have begg'd the Kings pardon; ſhould have ſuffer'd all the racks and tortures

a Tyrant could inflict; and from *Perillus*'s Bull ſhould have ſtill bellowed out that eternal truth, that his *Promiſe was to be kept*, that he is true to *Aſpatia*, that he dies for his Miſtreſs, then would his memory have been precious and ſweet to after-ages; and the Midſummer-Maydens would have *offer'd* their Garlands all at his grave.

And thus the King might kill *Amintor*, but *Amintor* could not pretend that the King or Fortune had made him falſe.

---- nec niſi miſerum fortuna Sinonem
Finxit, vanum etiam mendacemque improba finget.

Therefore, I ſay, the King was not to blame; or however not ſo far, as in any wiſe to render his life obnoxious.

But if the Poet intended to make an example of this King, and that the King right or wrong muſt be kill'd. *Amintor* only felt the higheſt provocations,

cations, and he alone ſhould have been drawn out for the wicked inſtrument, for *Melantius* had no reaſon to be angry at any but at his Siſter *Evadne*; nor could ſhe have any pretence to exerciſe her hands, unleſs it were againſt her ſelf.

If I miſtake not, in Poetry no woman is to kill a man, except her quality gives her the advantage above him, nor is a Servant to kill the Maſter, nor a Private Man, much leſs a Subject to kill a King, nor on the contrary.

Poetical decency will not ſuffer death to be dealt to each other by ſuch perſons, whom the Laws of Duel allow not to enter the liſts together.

There may be circumſtances that alter the caſe, as when there is a ſufficient ground of partiality in an *Audience*, either upon the account of *Religion* (as *Rinaldo*, or *Riccardo* in *Taſſo* might kill *Soliman*, or any other *Turkiſh* King or great *Sultan*) or elſe in favour of our *Country* for then a private *Engliſh Heroe* might over-

come a King of ſome Rival Nation.

But grant that *Evadne* lies under none of all theſe impediments; ſuppoſe her duly qualifi'd, and let the King wave his priviledges. Is there in Hiſtory any preſident of a *Magdalen* ſinner, that meerly from a fit of repentance fell foul on her *Gallant* at this horrid rate. Indeed, amongſt 'em, they call him *luſtful Thief*, *Devil-King*, *ſhameleſs Villain*, &c. the *Athenian* Servants were better bred.

(a) ὦ μῶρος, εἰ χρὴ δεσπότας εἰπεῖν τόδε.

Ah fool; if we may term our Maſters ſo.

ὄλοιτο μὰν μὴ δεσπότης γὰρ ἔστ' ἐμός.

Death take him! no, he is my Maſter.

But I ſay, what reaſon is there for all this outcry? What can ſhe lay to the King's charge?

(a) *Euripides.*

Thou

Thou kept'ſt me brave at Court,
and Whor'd me;
Thou marri'd me to a young noble
Gentleman,
And whor'd me ſtill.

The *noble Gentleman* indeed is wrong'd: but, good Madam, what reaſon is there for you to complain? did any force or philter overcome you? was not you as forward? did not you freely and heartily conſent? do not we remember your *hot riſing blood,*

--- Your much deſire, and as much
will
To put that wiſh'd act in practiſe,
as ever yet
Was known to Woman?

Has the King caſt you off? or broken articles? no: but you repent? then repent at home; you may make bold with your own body, and there let fly your rage and violence. For to kill your Lover, is no effect or opera-

tion of repentance, nor has any ground in nature or reaſon: 'tis worſe than brutiſh.

But indeed moſt of our Murderers hitherto have been no better; they are the Poets Ban-dogs let looſe to worry thoſe the Poet had mark'd out for ſlaughter; and never ſhew more reaſon or conſideration: and conſequently can in no wiſe occaſion either pitty or terror to cauſe that delight expected from Tragedy.

In *Epick Poetry* enemies are kill'd; and *Mezentius* muſt be a wicked Tyrant; the better to ſet off *Æneas*'s piety. In Tragedy, all the claſhing is amongſt friends, no *panegyrick* is deſign'd, nor ought intended but pitty and terror: and conſequently no ſhadow of ſenſe can be pretended for bringing any wicked perſons on the Stage. And yet in that *Mezentius* of *Virgil*, we find more vertue than in all the characters I have yet examind; and greater occaſion for pitty. We forget all his cruelties, when we ſee that trouble and infinite paſſion for his Son *Lauſus*, (who was ſlain

ſlain in his defence, and whom he would not ſurvive,) which is ſo admirably expreſt.

-------Æſtuat ingens
Imo in corde pudor, miſtoq; inſania luctu,
Et furiis agitatus amor, & conſcia virtus, &c.

Which lines, *Taſſo* (who tranſlates the whole paſſage under the names of *Soliman* and *Amiralto* into his *Geruſalemme*) thus renders in more words, but not with more advantage.

Ferue in mezzo del cor lo ſdegno e l'onta,
E co'l lutto la rabbia e miſta inſieme,
E da le furie l'agitato amore,
E noto a ſe medeſmo l'empio valore.

But to return, what yet makes this fact of *Evadne* more unlikely, is, that ſhe ſhould be hector'd into a repentance ſo pernicious, by her Brother

ther *Melantius*: who is ſaid to be *noble* and *brave*; but from his own mouth we may judg him a *Heroe*, like thoſe we met with formerly; all his words are brags; no *Dangerfield*, nor Captain *Thundergun* could ſit neer him. And for his manners, after one King was murder'd by his contrivance, he ſtands on his guard, and takes up the next King thus roundly.

Mel. *The ſhort is this,*
'Tis no ambition to lift up my ſelf,
Urges me thus: I do deſire again
To be a Subject, ſo I may be freed;
If not, I know my ſtrength, and will unbuild
This goodly Town; be ſpeedy and be wiſe
In a reply.

And now this new King, Brother to the former, as *heroickly* throws him a *blank*, and bids him make his

own

own terms. His words are theſe :

Liſ. Melanthius, *write in that thy choice ;*
My Seal is at it.

And more to the purpoſe we find not (in the Tragedy) of this ſecond King ; ſave only when he concludes the Play, and tells us, that he (for his part) will take warning how ever he meddles with a Woman ; as before has been cited.

Callianax is an old humorous Lord, neither *wiſe* nor *valiant*, as himſelf confeſſes ; and yet is entruſted with the ſtrength and keys of the Kingdom : whereas, in Comedy, he would ſcarce paſs for a good Yeoman of the Cellar.

His Daughter, *Aſpatia*, that gives name to this Tragedy, makes alſo here a very ſimple *figure*. Never did *Amintas* or *Paſtor fido* know any thing ſo tender ; nor were the *Arcadian* Hills ever water'd with the tears of a creature ſo innocent. Pretty Lamb! how mournfully it bleats! it needs

needs no *articulate* voice to move our compaſſion: it ſeeks no ſhades but under the *diſmal Yew*; and browſes only on *Willow-garlands*: yet it can ſpeak for a kiſs or ſo.

Aſp. *I'll trouble you no more, yet I will take*
A parting kiſs, and will not be deny'd.
You'l come, my Lord, and for the Virgins weep
When I am laid in earth; though you your ſelf
Can know no pitty. Thus I wind my ſelf
Into this Willow garland, &c.

At this rate of tattle ſhe runs on, and never knows when ſhe has ſaid enough.

This *Aſpatia* is a Lord's Daughter, and bred at Court; yet is in the preſence, and in the Bed-chamber of the Lady that ſupplants her, and amongſt the Bride-maids, where ſhe acts her part; and fawns upon the perjur'd man that forſakes her. And now can-

cannot I be perſwaded that there is ought of nature or probability in all this. Much leſs would I think this a Woman to handle a Sword, and kick *Amintor*, as we ſee her do ſoon after. Nor can I conceive wherein conſiſts that *bleſſing*, as ſhe calls it; which ſhe propos'd to her ſelf, in being kill'd by his hands. This may be *Romance*, but not *Nature*.

And certainly, of all the characters, this of *Amintor* is the moſt unreaſonable. No reaſon appears why he was contracted to *Aſpatia*, and leſs why he forſook her for *Evadne*; and leaſt of all for his diſſembling, and bearing ſo patiently the greateſt of provocations that could poſſibly be given. Certainly no ſpectacle can be more diſpleaſing, than to ſee a man ty'd to a poſt, and another buffetting him with an immoderate tongue. Certainly nothing can pleaſe a generous mind better, than that of *Virgil*.

Parcere ſubjectis, & debellare ſuperbos.

Poetry

Poetry will allow no provocation or injury, where it allows no revenge. And what pleaſure can there be in ſeeing a King threaten and hector without cauſe; when none may be ſuffer'd to make a return? Poetry will not permit an affront, where there can be no reparation. But well was it for us all, that *Amintor* was by the Poet his *maker*, endu'd with a reſtraining grace, and had his hands ty'd.

The King ſhould firſt have kill'd his own Mother to have made him mad enough, and fitted him for ſuch a monſtrous provocation. And *Amintor* too ſhould have been guilty of ſome enormous crime, (as he is indeed) that drew this curſe upon him, and prepar'd him to receive ſo horrid an out-rage. Both ſhould have been ripe for puniſhment, which this occaſion pulls down upon them, by making them kill each other. Then *Poetical Juſtice* might have had its courſe, though no way could pitty be due to either of them.

But

But ſurely this character of *Amintor* is (*a*) inconſiſtent, and is contradiction all over. He is a man of *Honour*, yet breaks his Faith with his Miſtreſs, bears the greateſt of affronts from his Wife that ever was given, and diſſembles it. 'Tis true; once or twice he is for ſinging a *Catch*, for the Fiddle and Dancing; but his countenance is not always ſet after that copy; he does not always diſſemble *ſcurvily*: for ſometimes we have him looking ſo pleas'd, that Comedy would almoſt be aſham'd of ſuch a Cuckold.

He is alſo honeſt, and of unſhaken loyalty; yet ſometimes has ſuch deviliſh *throws*, as would affright any true *liege* people from ſitting at a Coffee-houſe near him.

And all the *paſſions* in him work ſo aukwardly, as if he had *ſuck'd a Sow*. Thus he threatens.

Am. ---- *Come to my bed, or by thoſe hairs,*

(*a*) —— *Servetur ad imum*
Qualis ab incepto proceſſeret, & ſibi conſtet:

(*Which*

(*Which, if thou hadſt a Soul like to thy locks,*
Were threads for Kings to wear about their arms:
Evad. *Why ſo perhaps they are.*)
Am. *I'l drag thee to my bed.*---

Should not he rather have kick'd her out of doors? And did ever man huff with ſuch a *parentheſis*?

As the *Scene* and provocations work higher; what *Aſpatia* might have ſaid to him, he whines to *Evadne*.

Am. *What a ſtrange thing am I?*
Evad. *A miſerable one, one that my ſelf am ſorry for.*
Am. *Why ſhew it then in this,*
If thou haſt pitty, though thy love is none:
Kill me, and all true Lovers that ſhall live
In after-ages, croſt in their deſires,
Shall bleſs thy memory, and call thee good,

Be-

Becauſe ſuch mercy in thy heart was found
To rid a lingring Wretch.

Amintor lov'd *Aſpatia*, and marri'd *Evadne*, only becauſe the King commanded him. We heard nothing of his love to *Evadne* till now, that he is turn'd the amorous *Owſ*, when he ought to be all rage and indignation.

When he ſhould be ſilenc'd, he falls a preaching.

Am. *Oh thou haſt nam'd a word that wipes away*
All thoughts revengeful; in that ſacred name
The King, there lies a terror; what frail man
Dares lift his hand againſt it; let the gods
Speak to him when they pleaſe; till then let us ſuffer and wait.

This is loyal breath; but preſently comes a puff that drives us back to the North of *Scotland*.

Am. ----*And it is ſome eaſe*
To me in theſe extremes, that I knew this
Before I touch't thee; elſe had all the ſins
Of mankind ſtood betwixt me and the King,
I had gone through 'em to his heart and thine.

Oh, ſays he, 'tis well its no worſe, for had I lain with thee, I ſhould have been all fire and fury; I would not have valu'd twenty Kings, but have kill'd 'em all. Well *Aminior, de guſtibus non eſt diſputandum*, there is difference betwixt men and men; ſome one, peradventure, of a groſſer ſenſe, might have been as cool and well content, if he had been permitted the honour to *touch* for once where his Majeſty had toucht before. But now the ſtorm is over, and he proceeds,

Am. ----*Give me thy hand,*
Be careful of thy credit, and ſin cloſe,

'Tis

'Tis all I wiſh; upon my Chamber-floor
I'le reſt to night, that morning viſiters
May think we did as married people uſe,
And prithee ſmile upon me when they come,
And ſeem to toy, as if thou hadſt been pleas'd
With what we did. Evad. *Fear not, I will do this.*
Am. *Come let us practiſe, and as wantonly*
As ever loving Bride and Bridegroom met,
Let's laugh and enter here. Evad. *I am content.*
Am. *Down all the ſwellings of my troubled heart.*
When we walk thus entwin'd, let all eyes ſee,
If ever Lovers better did agree.

See how he concludes too, to the eternal diſgrace of *Rhime*. One might think that a man in his *predicament* ſhould ſcarce be in a mood to be ſo

very particular, and enlarge thus upon the ſubject, unleſs he were well pleas'd with the occaſion. Beſides, we find here, *Lovers*, *entic'd*, *laugh*, *Bridegroom*, *Bride*, *loving*, *wantonly*, *pleas'd*, *toy*, *prethee*, *did as married people uſe*; ſo many pleaſant words and pretty, got together, *Longinus* would ſwear that no man could be angry at heart with all theſe in his mouth; they ought none of them to be nam'd on the ſame day with *Evadne*, and the tranſactions in this *Tragedy*. What I have cited, is only from the *firſt Scene*, wherein *Amintor* has buſineſs; nor would I follow him farther, but that in the third *Act*, betwixt him and *Melantius* we find the firſt occaſion for a Tragical paſſion that yet (I think) theſe *Plays* have afforded us; which ariſes from the conduct of an Husband who diſcovers the ſecret of his Wives diſhonour to his Friend her Brother. *Melantius* importunes *Amintor* to tell the cauſe of his trouble. When the matter comes to be broken, they proceed thus:

Mel.

Mel. ----*What is it?*
Am. *Why 'tis this,---it is too big*
To get out, let my tears make way awhile.

Here I ſuppoſe, *Amintor* might better have wept, without telling it to *Melantius.*

Mel. *Puniſh me ſtrangely Heaven, if he eſcape*
Of life or fame, that brought this Youth to this.
Am. *Your Siſter.*
Mel. *Well ſaid.*
Am. *You'l wiſh't unknown, when you have heard it.*
Mel. *No.*
Amint. *Is much to blame,*
And to the King has given her Honour up---

This line at the full length, is ſurely enough, his care is, ſo to mince that matter as not to offend the Brother. Some broken ſpeeches, as *your Siſter*, *the King*, *her honour*, or

the like, with now and then a ſprinkling of his tears, might have ſuffic'd, and the Brother ſhould have been left to gueſs and paraphraſe the broad meaning. But *Amintor* harps upon the ſame ſtring out of time himſelf. What follows, is plainly to upbraid and affront his Friend by words, though he intended nothing leſs; for he goes on:

Am. *And lives in whoredom with him.*

And what yet is more ſilly, in the next he adds,

Am. *She's wanton, I am loath to ſay a whore,*
Though it be true.

This provokes *Melintius* to draw his Sword, and he is for fighting *Amintor*; yet I am apt to be of *Amintors* mind, which he thus expreſſes:

Am. ---*It was baſe in you,*

To

To urge a weighty ſecret from your Friend,
And then rage at it.

Yet *Melantius* perſiſts, till *Amintor* is provoked to draw his Sword, and then *Melantius* puts up. *Harlequin* and *Scaramouttio* might do theſe things. Tragedy ſuffers 'em not, here is no place for Cowards, nor for giddy fellows, and Bullies with their ſquabbles. When a Sword is once drawn in Tragedy, the Scabbard may be thrown away; there is no leaving what is once deſign'd, till it be thoroughly effected. *Iphigenia Taurica* went to ſacrifice *Oreſtes*, and ſhe deſiſted, why? ſhe diſcover'd him to be her Brother. None here are ſuch Fools as by words to begin a quarrel; nor of ſo little reſolution, to be talkt agen from it, without ſome new emergent cauſe that diverts them. No (*a*) ſimple alteration of mind ought to produce or hinder any action in a Tragedy.

(a) *Ariſt.*

Yet far more faulty is what follows; the *counter-turn* has no ſhadow of ſenſe or ſobriety. *Melantius* has ſwaggered away his fury, and now *Amintor* is all agog to be afighting; for what; but to get his ſecret back again.

Am. ----*Give it me again,*
Or I will find it whereſoe're it lies
Hid in the mortall'ſt part, invent
a way to get it back.

Thou art mad *Amintor*, Bedlam is the only place for thee; if thou comeſt here with thy madneſs, Tragedy expects (*b*) *ut cum ratione inſanias.*

Hercules was mad, and kill'd his Wife and Children, yet there was reaſon in his madneſs; a miſt was caſt before his eyes, he miſtook them for their enemies, and believ'd he was revenging their quarrel whilſt he beat their brains out. That was a madneſs might move pity; but this of *Amintor* is meerly bruitiſh,

(b) *Terence.*

and

and can move nothing but our aversion. Here is a bluſter begun without provocation, and ended without any thing of ſatisfaction.

But that I may never find a fault without ſhewing ſomething better. For a quarrel betwixt two friends, with the *turn* and *counter-turn*: let me commend that Scene in the *Iphigenia* in *Aulide*. Where *Agamemnon* having conſented that his Daughter ſhould be ſacrific'd, and (that her Mother might let her come the more willingly) ſent for her with a pretence that ſhe was to be marri'd to *Achilles*; yet in a fit of Fatherly tenderneſs he privately diſpatches Letters to hinder her coming. *Menelaus* meets the Meſſenger going from *Agamemnon*, ſuſpects the buſineſs, takes the Letters from him before *Agamemnon*'s face, and read them; and now aroſe the conteſt: *Menelaus* was zealous for the publick good, the more, becauſe it agreed ſo much with his own intereſt: and *Agamemnon* had cauſe enough to ſtand up for his Daughter; but yet, at length, with weep-

weeping eyes, and ſhame for his weakneſs and partiality, he yielded up the cauſe. But *Menelaus* now ſeeing the conflict of *Agamemnon*, the tears rowling down his cheeks, and his repentance, this ſight melted the heart of him, and now he turns Advocate for *Iphigenia*: He will have *Hellen* and the concerns of *Greece* left to the mercy of Heaven, rather than that his Brother *Agamemnon* ſhould do ſo much violence to himſelf; and that ſo vertuous a young Princeſs be trapan'd to loſe her life.

Here all the motions ariſe from occaſions great and juſt; and this is matter for a *Scene* truly paſſionate and Tragical.

We may remember (how-ever we find this Scene of *Melanthius* and *Amintor* written in the Book) that at the *Theater* we have a good Scene Acted, there is work cut out, and both our *Æſopus* and *Roſcius* are on the Stage together: Whatever defect may be in *Amintor* and *Melanthius*; Mr. *Hart* and Mr. *Mohun* are wanting in nothing. To theſe we owe for what

what is pleaſing in the Scene; and to this Scene we may impute the ſucceſs of the *Maids Tragedy*.

The *Drolls* in this *Play* make not ſo much noiſe as in the two former; but are leſs excuſable here. In the former they keep ſome diſtance, and make a ſort of *interlude*: but here they thruſt into the principal places; when we ſhould give our full attention to what is Tragedy. When we would liſten to a *Lute*, our ears are rapt with the *tintamar* and twang of the *Tongs* and *Jewſtrumps*. A man may be free to make a jeſt of his own misfortunes: but ſurely 'tis unnatural and barbarous to laugh when we ſee another on the Scaffold. Some would laugh to find me mentioning *Sacrifices*, *Oracles*, and *Goddeſſes*: old Superſtitions, ſay they, not practicable, but more than ridiculous on our Stage. Theſe have not obſerv'd with what Art *Virgil* has manag'd the Gods of *Homer*, nor with what judgment *Taſſo* and *Cowley* employ the heavenly powers in a Chriſtian Poem. The like hints from *Sophocles* and *Euripides*

des might alſo be improv'd by modern Tragedians; and ſomething thence devis'd ſuitable to our Faith and Cuſtomes. 'Tis the general reaſon I contend for: Nor would I more have Oracles or Goddeſſes on the Stage, then hear the perſons ſpeak *Greek*, they are Apes and not men that imitate with ſo little diſcretion.

Some would blame me for inſiſting and examining only what is apt to *pleaſe*, without a word of what might profit.

1. I believe the end of all Poetry is to *pleaſe*.

2. Some ſorts of Poetry pleaſe without profiting.

3. I am confident whoever writes a Tragedy cannot pleaſe but muſt alſo profit; 'tis the Phyſick of the mind that he makes palatable.

And beſides the *purging* of the *paſſions*; ſomething muſt ſtick by obſerving that conſtant order, that harmony and beauty of Providence, that neceſſary relation and chain, whereby the cauſes and the effects, the vertues and rewards, the vices and their puniſh-

punishments are proportion'd and link'd together; how deep and dark soever are laid the Springs, and however intricate and involv'd are their operations.

But these enquiries I leave to men of more flegm and consideration.

Othello comes next to hand, but laying my Papers together without more scribling, I find a volumn, and a greater burthen then I dare well obtrude upon you.

If I blindly wander in erroneous paths, 'tis more then time Mr. *Shepheard* that you set me right, and if I am not so much out of the way; then most of the main faults in these other Tragedies cannot be far from our view, if we tread not on their skirts already.

I will wait your direction e're I advance farther, and be sure of your pardon for what is past. Many seeming contradictions I rather chose to slip over, then to be ever casting in your way some *parenthesis* or some *distinction*.

Many

Many other ſlips and miſtakes too you meet withall, but *the fortune of* Greece *depends not on them.*

Nor I know could you (that read Hebrew without the pricks) be at a loſs for the ſenſe, where you found not a period truly pointed.

If the Characters I have examin'd are the ſame I take them for, I ſend you Monſters enough for one *Bartholmew-fair*: but what would vex a Chriſtian, theſe are ſhown us for our own likeneſſes, theſe are the *Duch* Pictures of humane kind.

I have thought our Poetry of the laſt Age as rude as our Architecture, one cauſe thereof might be, that *Ariſtotle's treatiſe of Poetry* has been ſo little ſtudied amongſt us, it was perhaps Commented upon by all the great men in *Italy*, before we well know (on this ſide of the *Alps*) that there was ſuch a Book in being. And though *Horace* comprizes all in that ſmall Epiſtle of his; yet few will think long enough together to be Maſters, and to underſtand the reaſon of what is deliver'd ſo in ſhort. With

With the remaining *Tragedies* I ſhall alſo ſend you ſome reflections on that *Paradiſe loſt* of *Miltons*, which ſome are pleas'd to call a Poem, and aſſert *Rime* againſt the ſlender Sophiſtry wherewith he attacques it : and alſo a Narrative of *Petrarch's* Coronation in the *Capitol*, with all the *Pontificalibus* on that occaſion, which ſeems wanting in *Selden*, where he treats on that ſubject. Let me only anticipate a little in behalf of the *Cataline*, and now tell my thoughts, that though the contrivance and œconomy is faulty enough, yet we there find (beſides what is borrow'd from others) more of Poetry and of good thought, more of Nature and of Tragedy, then peradventure can be ſcrap't together from all thoſe other *Plays*.

Nor can I be diſpleas'd with honeſt *Ben*, when he rather chooſes to borrow a *Melon* of his Neighbour, than to treat us with a *Pumpion* of his own growth.

But

But all is ſubmitted to you Men of better ſenſe, by

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